PAMPHLET BINDER

E. C. Caldwell

Bible Class Primers.

EDITED BY

PRINCIPAL SALMOND, D.D., ABERDEEN.

THE PARABLES

OF

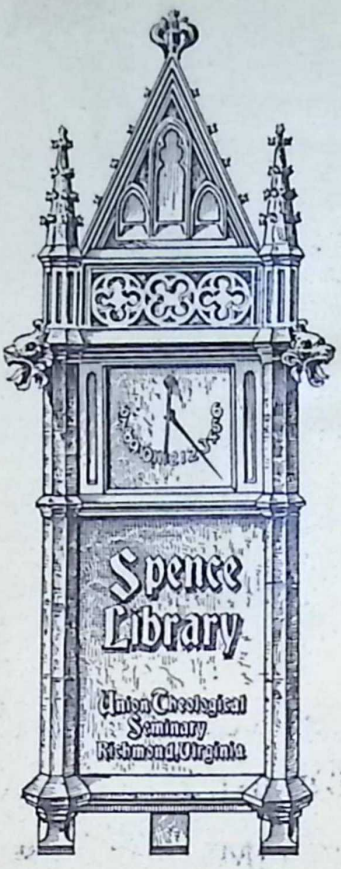
OUR LORD

BY THE EDITOR.

Edinburgh:

T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.

LONDON: SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT & CO., LTD.



In Loving Memory
of the Devoted Service of

Eugene Craighead Caldwell
and
Margaret Beverley Caldwell

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NOTE.

WELFARE OF YOUTH EXAMINATIONS.

Candidates in the Senior Grade take the whole Primer.

Candidates in the Middle Grade take § 25 (*The Sower: its Circumstances*) *to the end of the Primer.*

Candidates in the Junior Grade take § 25 (*The Sower: its Circumstances*) *to* § 70 (*Scope of the Parable of the Prodigal Son*) *inclusive.*

S. D. F. S.

THE
PARABLES OF OUR LORD.

1. THE CHARM OF FIGURATIVE SPEECH.—The Parables of the Lord Jesus are the choicest examples of figurative speech as used to express religious truth. Speech of this kind has a spell in it which makes itself felt by most minds, arresting them, captivating them, and making them open to the hearing of instruction. It has had a special attraction for the peoples of the East, with whom the imagination is quicker and more active than the logical faculty. The great family of nations known as the Semitic, to which the Hebrews, together with the Arabs, the Syrians, the Babylonians, and other remarkable races belong, has shown a particular genius and liking for it. So we find it used abundantly and in different forms in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Many examples at once suggest themselves. We recall, for instance, the beautiful words of the Eightieth Psalm in which Israel is likened to a vine which the Lord brought out of Egypt and planted, the shadow of which covered the mountains; Ezekiel's wonderful picture of the valley full of bones, many and very dry, into which the breath came so that they lived and stood upon their feet (chap. xxxvii. 1-14); Daniel's vision of the

four great beasts which came up from the sea (chap. vii.); and numerous passages of like pictorial power and grace. The prophetical writings of the Old Testament are peculiarly rich in a style of speech which has so natural a charm; and in the New Testament the Gospels, those matchless memorials of our Lord's own words, surpass all the other books in the place which they give it.

2. OUR LORD'S USE OF FIGURATIVE SPEECH.—The language of emblem and figure has always been a great instrument in the hand of the skilled teacher, and the Lord Jesus used it as no one ever has used it. Knowing its power and the fascination which it had for the Jews of His day, he employed it largely and in a variety of forms, in order to gain access to their minds with His message regarding things divine. Sometimes He adopted the brief simile, as when He spoke of His disciples as called to be "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world" (Matt. v. 13, 14); sometimes He selected the larger comparison, as when He discoursed of Himself as the "Good Shepherd," and of His disciples as His "sheep," who hear His voice, and know not the voice of strangers (John x. 1-17). But above all His chosen method of instruction was that more definite, artistic, and effectual form of figurative speech to which the distinctive name of *Parable* is given If He had been content to communicate what He had to teach in abstract, unembellished fashion, much of it might have failed to catch the attention of those who heard Him or to tarry in their memories. But, taking this way, "He did as He declared His Apostles must do," says one of the

most careful students of the Parables, "if they would be scribes instructed unto the Kingdom, and able to instruct others (Matt. xiii. 52); He brought forth out of His treasure things new and old; by the help of the old He made intelligible the new; by the aid of the familiar He introduced that which was strange; from the known He passed easily to the unknown."

3. THE WORD "PARABLE."—The word *Parable* which occurs so frequently in the Gospels, comes from a Greek term which expressed the *throwing* or *placing of one thing by the side of another*, and so was applied to figurative language—comparisons, similitudes, and the like. Words are living things, and have their histories. This one would have a very interesting story to tell us, if we could follow it out. Among the ancient Greek writers it had a somewhat broad and general sense. It was used of any simple statement which took the form of an analogy or a bit of reasoning from something that was familiar and acknowledged to something that was not so. For example, one wishing to impress upon the people the importance of seeing to have good rulers appointed to direct public affairs, employed this short argument—"Ye would not choose pilots or athletes by lot; why then should you choose statesmen?" And this was called a *Parable*. The word had a life of many centuries after this, and during these it came to its greatest honour. Then in its later age it lost its point and its poetical dignity, and sank to the level of a term applicable to any kind of speech. After all the changes which it has gone through in the course of these many hundred

years it may be recognised still in this last and most reduced condition in such words as *parole*, *parley*, *palaver*, *parliament*, &c. But in the Gospels we have it in its most distinct individuality, its highest imaginative grace, its supremest dignity.

4. THE WORD "PARABLE" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.—The word *Parable*, as found on the lips of Jesus and the Evangelists, represents a Hebrew word which means a *comparison* or *similitude*, but has a wide range of use in the Old Testament. It covers several forms of picturesque and suggestive speech—all those forms in which ideas are presented in the robes of imagery. As its applications are thus varied, it is variously translated in our English version. It is used, for instance, of short, pithy, proverbial sayings, as when in 1 Sam. x. 12 it is said, "Therefore it became a *proverb*. Is Saul also among the prophets?" In this sense it is used of the maxims of wisdom which are contained in the book that is distinctively known as the *Proverbs*, these maxims being given in large measure in the form of comparisons, as when it is said, "Treasures of wickedness profit nothing; but righteousness delivereth from death" (x. 2). It is used also of enigmatical utterances, riddles, or "dark sayings," as in Psalm lxxviii. 2, Prov. i. 6; and of mysterious prophetic intimations, such as the words of Balaam, the son of Beor, regarding the greatness of the chosen people, the "Star" that was to "come forth out of Jacob," and the "Sceptre" that was "to rise out of Israel" (Num. xxiii. 7, 18; xxiv. 3, 15). But it is likewise used of figurative speech which takes more or less the

form of a narrative, and in this it comes nearest the *Parable* proper. An instance of this last is found in Ezekiel's "riddle" or "parable" of the great eagles, the one "with great wings and long pinions, full of feathers" which came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar and also of the seed of the land and planted it, so that it became a great vine; the other "with great wings and many feathers," towards which the vine did bend its roots and shot forth its branches, "from the beds of its plantation, that he might water it" (chap. xvii. 1-10).

5. THE WORD "PARABLE" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.—In the New Testament the word has a similar flexibility of use. It is applied, *e.g.*, to terse, proverbial sayings, as in our Lord's own word in Luke iv. 23. "Doubtless ye will say unto me this *parable*, Physician, heal thyself" (R.V.) Institutions, persons, or events that were of a typical or suggestive character are occasionally described as "parables." In the Epistle to the Hebrews the entrance of the High Priest alone into the second tabernacle once a year, and Abraham's recovery of Isaac as from the dead, are so designated (chaps. ix. 9; xi. 19)--although in our English Version the Greek word is rendered *figure*. It is used also of comparisons or illustrative statements which have no narrative in them. Thus Christ's words about the things that defile and the blind leading the blind are called *parables* (Matt. xv. 15; Luke vi. 39); and the fact that the fig-tree, "when her branch is now tender, and putteth forth its leaves," is a sign that "summer is nigh," is given as a *parable* of the truth

that the Son of Man "is nigh, *even* at the doors" (Matt. xxiv. 32, 33). But its commonest use in the Gospels is also its most specific use, and the one with which we are more immediately concerned, namely, as a designation of those great words of the Lord Jesus in which by figure and narrative conjoined He sought to commend to men's understandings and hearts the spiritual truths of His kingdom.

6. THE DISTINCTIVE NATURE AND POSITION OF THE "PARABLE."—Those discourses of our Lord, therefore, which are specially known as His *Parables*, have this peculiarity that they combine more or less of a narrative with the comparison or similitude. They are illustrative comparisons with something of a story in them. They are defined as "narratives expressly imagined for the purpose of representing a religious truth in pictorial figure." As such the *parable* in Scripture is a method of teaching which is almost confined to our Lord Himself. Also as regards the records of His use of it, it is only in the history of His ministry which is given in the three Synoptical Gospels that the *parable* proper occurs. Neither the word nor the thing is found in John's Gospel. That Gospel is much occupied with the report of our Lord's discourses, and these discourses are largely in figurative form. But it is a different kind of figurative language that we find there. In John we have the *allegorical* form, of which we have examples in the great words about the Bread of Life, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the True Vine (vi. 35; x. 7, 11; xv. 1). But this Evangelist does not give the *parable* proper. The writings of the Apostles, too, are equally devoid of any instance of the *parable*. In

the Old Testament, however, it is occasionally found in a more or less complete form. The best and most memorable example of it there is the story of the rich man who robbed the poor man of the one little ewe lamb that was his cherished possession; by which the prophet Nathan roused the dormant conscience of King David in the matter of the wife of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. xii. 1-6). Other passages, corresponding more or less perfectly to the idea of the *parable*, occur in the writings of the Prophets. One of the most attractive of these is Isaiah's song of the "well-beloved touching his vineyard" in a very fruitful hill, about which he dug a trench, and gathered out the stones, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in it, and hewed out a wine-press therein, and looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes (chap. v. 1-7). Another Old Testament instance, which has even a certain resemblance to some of our Lord's own Parables, is the passage in which the prophet speaks of the plowman plowing continually to sow, opening and breaking the clods of the earth, casting abroad the fitches, scattering the cummin, and putting in the wheat in rows, the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border (Isaiah xxviii. 23-29).

7. THE PARABLE AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE PROVERB AND THE ALLEGORY. — The parable proper, therefore, as used by our Lord, stands apart from all other forms of figurative speech which are used in Scripture, and is to be carefully distinguished from them. There are many *proverbs*, for instance, in the Bible, and these are often expressed

in vivid pictorial language. But the *Proverb* is something quite different from the *Parable*. It is usually briefer, it deals with less lofty subjects, and it does not concern itself with telling a story. The Bible-writers also make frequent use of the *allegorical* mode of discourse. But the *Allegory* is distinct from the Parable. It has in it less of the hidden and mysterious, and it interprets itself. In it the person or thing that is to be illustrated by some natural object is identified at once with that object. So when our Lord speaks the great allegory of the vine and the husbandman and the branches, under which He instructs His disciples in the truth of their relation to Himself and to God, He begins by stating that He *is* Himself the true Vine, and that His Father is the Husbandman (John xv. 1).

8. THE PARABLE AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE FABLE.—We see still more clearly what the Parable is when we compare it with the Fable. The Fable is also used in Scripture, though very sparingly. But it is something far removed in many ways from the Parable, much as the one may sometimes resemble the other in outward aspect. The difference between any one of Æsop's Fables,—the Countryman and the Serpent, the Dog with the Bone, the Geese and the Cranes, or any other, and any one of our Lord's Parables will be felt at once. The Fable is a lower kind of figurative speech, and deals with less elevated subjects. It is of the earth, and looks to common life and business. Its function is to convey lessons of practical prudential wisdom. It inculcates the virtues of prudence, industry, patience,

self-control, and the like. It exposes evil as folly rather than as sin, and holds up faults to ridicule, vices to contempt or scorn or fear. It takes great liberties, therefore, with the fancy, endowing plants and animals with human faculties, making them reason and speak. But the Parable moves in the higher sphere of religion, and deals with spiritual things, especially with the truths of the kingdom of God. Its temper and its figures are correspondingly lofty. It never descends to mockery or satire; its illustrations are true to reality, and are never monstrous or unnatural. Like the Fable it speaks through natural objects, trees, plants, or animals. But it never represents these as doing anything contrary to their nature. It has no speaking beasts, no reasoning trees. The grotesque and improbable elements which are associated with the Fable unfit it for serving as an instrument for the expression of high religious truth; and it is never found either in our Lord's discourses or in any of the New Testament writings. In the Old Testament it does occur, but so rarely that there are not more than two passages which can be regarded as genuine examples of it. One of these is the word by which Jotham sought to expose the folly of the men of Shechem when they made Abimelech king over them—the story of the trees going forth to anoint a king over them and being refused by the olive, the fig, and vine, but invited by the bramble to put their trust in its shadow (Judges ix. 8-15). The other is the answer given by Jehoash, king of Israel, to the messengers of the King of Judah, warning Amaziah of the folly of a conflict by the

tale of the thistle in Lebanon, which sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, "Give thy daughter to my son to wife," and was trodden down by a wild beast that passed by (2 Kings xiv. 8-10).

9. THE PARABLES OF OTHER TEACHERS.—The Parable has been a favourite method of instruction with many teachers, especially with those of the East—Arabs, Persians, and others. It was also much used by Jewish teachers before and in Christ's time. Eminent Rabbis—Gamaliel, Hillel, and others—are reported to have taught by parables, and numerous examples of these Jewish sayings have come down to us. Some of them are of much beauty and point. One of them, for instance, touches the question why the good so often die young, and it runs thus: "It is like a king who, walking in his garden, saw some roses which were yet buds, breathing an ineffable sweetness. He thought, 'If these shed such sweetness while yet they are buds, what will they do when they are fully blown?' After a while, the king entered the garden anew, thinking to find the roses now blown, and to delight himself with their fragrance, but arriving at the place, he found them pale and withered, and yielding no smell. He exclaimed with regret, 'Had I gathered them while yet tender and young, and while they gave forth their sweetness, I might have delighted myself with them, but now I have no pleasure in them.' The next year the king walked in his garden, and finding rosebuds scattering fragrance, he commanded his servants, 'Gather them, that I may enjoy them before they wither as last year they did.'" (Trench.) But

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mostly they were artificial, unnatural and fantastic in form, and often trivial in meaning. They were also meant for the Scribes and their disciples, not for the common people. For the latter there were endless rules, and forms of prayer, and prescriptions of fastings; but the parables of the Rabbis were not for the common herd. To the Scribes and their scholars the toilers in city and country, the tillers of the soil and the tenders of flocks, were the "accursed," the "people of the earth," of whom it was written that "they shall not be found where parables are spoken."

10. CHRIST'S PARABLES AS COMPARED WITH THOSE OF OTHER TEACHERS. — In teaching by Parables, Christ adopted a method that was recognised among the Jews. But, however His Parables might in form resemble some of those of the Rabbis, in quality and character they differed vastly from them, and were incomparably superior to them. They were free of all that was forced, exaggerated, and grotesque. They had nothing of the stiffness and exclusiveness of the schools of learning, neither were they confined to the educated classes. They were spoken to the disciples and to the people, and were open to the mass of common men. They were taken from the simplest and most familiar things in nature, life, social habit, and popular custom, from the common activities of agriculture, gardening, fishing, commerce, the preparation of bread, the finding of treasure-trove, and the like. But they were of the heavens heavenly, speaking of the highest truths, the great things of God and

the souls of men, as no other parables have ever done. They have a wealth of spiritual truth enshrined in them which will never be exhausted. They exhibit so perfect a combination of beauty of form with affluence of contents, that they have been compared to "apples of gold in network of silver," or to caskets of finest workmanship, which hold jewels richer than their own goodly selves.

II. THE PLACE OF THE PARABLE IN CHRIST'S TEACHING.—It does not appear, however, that the Parable was our Lord's chosen mode of instruction from the beginning of His public ministry. The Gospels indicate that He adopted it at a particular point in the progress of His mission. He seems to have spoken at first in a more direct and less pictorial form, instructing men in the eternal principles of duty, in the spirituality of the Divine Law, in the meaning of the Baptist's mission, in the graces of repentance and forgiveness, in the penalties of sin, in the beatitudes of the poor in spirit, the mourner, the meek, the righteous, the merciful, the pure, the peace-maker, the persecuted. We see this in the Sermon on the Mount, and in His earlier recorded words, and so He appears to have taught for a time both in Judæa and in Galilee, in the synagogue, in the fields, and by the sea. Then there came a point in His ministry when His work was far beyond its beginnings, and things were tending to the crisis, at which He began to speak to the multitude in parables, and to do this in a way which led His disciples to ask an explanation of His action. "The disciples came and said unto Him," Matthew tells us, "Why speakest thou unto

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them in parables?" (Matt. xiii. 10.) The question implied surprise, and their surprise arose from the fact that there was a marked change in His ways. His teaching, indeed, had never been given in abstract, didactic terms. From the first He had made large use of imaginative forms, similes and figures of speech, like the "city set on a hill," the "candle" placed not "under the bushel" but on "the candlestick" to give light to all in the house, and many more (Matt. v. 14, 15); and some of these, such as His words regarding the "bridegroom" and the "children of the bed-chamber," the new patch on the old cloth, the new wine in the old bottles (Matt. ix. 15-17), approached the Parable. But now he began to make definite and systematic use of it in its recognised forms, and that not only in intercourse with His disciples, but in speaking to the masses of the common people who hung upon His lips by the Lake and in the villages of Galilee. It is not certain indeed that he made continuous use of this mode of instruction thereafter. The parables recorded in Matthew xiii. are separated from another group, the report of which we owe mainly to Luke, by a period of some months. But from the time when he spake the great parable of the *Sower* the parabolic method had a large and distinct place in His recorded teaching.

12. THE REASON FOR THE CHANGE.—It may be that this change in His method of teaching was occasioned by the poor reception which had been accorded to the more direct moral instruction which He had given up to this point. For in large measure it had only revealed the dulness of the people's

understanding and their hardness of heart; and at best it had been but superficially regarded. But the reason for the change lay more particularly in the fact that He had now reached that point in His ministry at which He had to speak of the deeper things of His Kingdom, its purely spiritual nature, the secret of entrance into it, the eternal issues hidden in it, the vocation of suffering connected with it, the Passion and the Cross which lay before Himself in planting it among men, the long and unexpected course which its establishment on earth was to take. These were truths so strange and unwelcome to the Jew, so unlike all his anticipations of the Kingdom which his Messiah was to set up, so hard for his heart to receive or for his understanding to grasp, that it was necessary to adopt a mode of discourse which should conciliate him in his prejudice, and gradually gain access to his mind. To have begun by speaking directly of these "mysteries" of His Kingdom to people utterly unprepared for them, and by nature and training opposed to them, would have defeated His purpose. He, therefore, adopted this way, which would bring those new spiritual truths gradually home to the minds of His hearers, stimulating inquiry on the part of those who were most receptive, and staying offence on the part of the dull and the hostile.

13. THE USES OF PARABOLIC TEACHING.—(1) One chief use of the "Parable" is to attract the mind and conciliate attention. The truths which Christ had to speak to men are not naturally welcome. Men have to be won to them, and the *parable* is a ready (2) means of securing this. It has a second use in

making the truth intelligible, in illustrating it, and in opening the understanding and heart to it. So it acts as a revealer, unveiling truth. A third use (3) is the service it renders to the memory and the reflection. By it the mind is induced to retain a truth once lodged in it, and is helped, as it broods over it, to see farther and farther into its meaning. And it has a fourth use, in acting as a protector of the (4) truth, being like a seed, the shell of which "should guard the life of the inner germ, till that should be ready to unfold itself, till there should be a soil prepared for it in which it could take root, and find nourishment suitable to its needs" (Trench). In this respect it serves the purpose of a veil, bringing the things of the Spirit of God within the ken of those to whom they are an offence, yet covering them so that the scorner and the caviller may not at once see all that is in them, or be excited to an enmity which might bar their entrance to the mind. Addressed to the hostile-minded, it so far conceals the truth, in order that perchance it may find its way to the notice of men who *will* not receive it because it means a complete change in their beliefs and ways of life,—men who, as is implied in the words quoted in Matthew's Gospel (xiii. 13), *if they saw*, would not perceive, and *if they heard*, would not understand. No doubt our Lord, like other Jewish teachers, employed the *parable* for all these purposes. And so far it is an aid to human infirmity, and a mighty instrument of education.

14. THE PENAL SIDE OF PARABOLIC TEACHING.—But the Gospels indicate that the "Parable" has yet another use, and one of a very different kind.

It is also the one that our Lord specially referred to, when the disciples asked Him, on the occasion of His discourse on the *Sower*, why He spoke in parables. According to Matthew's Gospel (xiii. 11-15) He replied then, that while the disciples themselves might know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, it being *given* them by God to do so, it was otherwise with the multitude; and that He spoke as He did to the dull people *because* seeing they saw not, and hearing they heard not, neither did they understand. In Mark's Gospel (iv. 10-12) it is still more strongly expressed, "Unto them that are without, all things are done in parables: *that* seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest haply they should turn again, and it should be forgiven them" (R.V.). These are words of great solemnity, and of no less difficulty. But they mean that, as the "Parable" discloses the hidden power and beauty of spiritual truth when it is addressed to the open and receptive mind, so it acts in the opposite way with the gross, the prejudiced, the obdurate. They point to what may be called a *penal* object or result of the "Parable." That our Lord had this in view in uttering those solemn words appears from the fact that He quotes a passage from Isaiah (vi. 10), in which the prophet speaks of a blindness which was to come as punishment upon the impenitent and hardened people. In this way He calls attention to a fact of awful moment, namely, that, according to the Divine order and the nature of things, sin punishes itself by eating out the capacity for better

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things; that the persistent love of the darkness issues in insensibility to the light; that the one thing follows on the other with all the certainty of law, and so far, therefore, by the Divine purpose. In those far-reaching words, indeed, which He spoke in connection with the giving of His first Parable, our Lord declares more than one of the imperial laws of the spiritual world. Of these the first is this—that the knowledge of Divine truth is a gift of God, but a gift given to all who resemble the disciples then about the Lord Jesus in being seekers after the truth: "it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. xiii. 11). The second is this—that knowledge adds to knowledge, that if one attains to any measure of insight into divine things, and uses that worthily, it will lead him on to more: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance" (Matt. xiii. 12). But the third is this—that failure to appreciate and use the truth that is within one's reach has for its result the loss of the spiritual faculty, the penalty of inability to see and discern: "but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (Matt. xiii. 12). So it has been said of the "Parable," that it is like the pillar of cloud and fire, turning a "dark side towards Egyptians, but a bright side towards Israelites, which comforts them," or like a "shell that keeps good fruit *for* the diligent, but keeps it *from* the slothful" (M. Henry).

15. THE NUMBER OF OUR LORD'S PARABLES.—Our Lord probably spoke more parables than those recorded in the Gospels. In reporting

certain of them the second Gospel adds the remark that "with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it" (Mark iv. 33). As to those which have come down to us in the Gospel narrative, their number is variously estimated according to the definition, less or more strict, of what makes a *parable* in the proper sense of the term. Some include in the list such discourses as those in Luke about the lord who, when he comes, finds the servants watching, and girds himself, and makes them sit down to meat, and serves them (xii. 36-40); and about "the faithful and wise steward" who is set over the household, and the servant who, because his master delays his coming, beats the under-servants, and eats and drinks and is drunken (xii. 41-48). Others regard these as examples of ordinary metaphorical discourse. So, too, passages like those about the wise and foolish builders (Matt. vii. 24-27), the children at play in the market-place (Matt. xi. 16-19), the unclean spirit returning to his house, finding it empty, swept and garnished, and bringing into it seven other spirits worse than himself (Matt. xii. 43-45), are taken by some to be parables, but by others not so. Hence one estimate reduces the number to 27, while another raises it to 50. It is enough to say that we have from 30 to 33 discourses of a figurative kind, which may be reckoned true parables.

16. MINOR OR PARTIAL PARABLES.—With this estimate of the number of genuine and complete Parables, there are others which are best described as *Minor*, *Partial*, or *Rudimentary* Parables. These

germ-parables, as they may also be called, are of great beauty and express great principles. To this class belong the two short sayings about the unwisdom of placing a patch of undressed cloth upon an old garment, or putting new wine into old skin bottles; by which Christ illustrated the principle that new life requires new forms, and that it would be both incongruous and injurious to attempt to combine the old prescriptions of the Jewish religion with the new spirit of the Gospel. To this, too, belongs the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, which employs the figure of two house-builders, the one founding his dwelling prudently on the rock, the other rearing his carelessly on the sand, as an illustration of the difference between the wise and the foolish hearer of the word (Matt. vii. 24-27). Of the same order is that saying about the children at their sports in the market-place, who refuse to answer either to the piping or to the mourning of their playfellows—a figure of the wilful and inconsistent conduct of the Jews of His own generation who would have neither John's ministry nor His own (Matt. xi. 16-19). So it is also with the discourse on the two servants, one who is found faithful and engaged in duty when his lord cometh, and who is consequently honoured; the other, misled by his lord's delay, and giving way to faithlessness, oppression, and indulgence, who is consequently punished—a figure of the blessedness of the ever-dutiful, the increasing deterioration of character which sets in when duty begins to be disregarded, and the certain retribution that waits the abused stewardship of life (Luke xii. 41-48).

17. THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE PARABLES.—It is a question of great interest whether there is any such connection of principle, occasion, or subject in our Lord's parables as makes it possible to arrange them in groups. Many attempts have been made to classify them according to likeness of subject or intention. Sometimes they are arranged in two great groups as, *e.g.*, into (1) those dealing with the *Nature and Development of the Kingdom of God;* and (2) those dealing with the *Right Conduct of Members of the Kingdom.* But for the most part a threefold division is preferred. Some, for example, throw them into these three classes—(1) those which describe the Kingdom of Heaven as a Divine force; (2) those which describe it as a Church founded by the divine forces of the Word; (3) those which describe the *Members* of the Kingdom in their disposition, walk, and destiny. Others group them into—(1) those dealing with the Divine Kingdom, in its nature, growth and consummation; (2) those dealing mainly with the life of man; and (3) those dealing again with the Kingdom, but under the special aspect of its end and the divine retribution connected with it. A Swiss scholar divides them into—(1) those referring to the Kingdom of God in its preparatory existence under the Old Testament economy; (2) those referring to its realisation in the Church, or to the new dispensation in its foundation and consummation; (3) those referring to the life of individual members in the Church. Similar is the division into these three classes—(1) Parables treating of Messiah's Reign in its Origin and its Progress,

given about the middle of His ministry ; (2) Parables treating of Messiah's Reign in its Consummation, given towards the Close of His ministry ; (3) Intermediate Parables, given by Luke (xiii.-xix.), and treating mainly of the *individual*. Another classification which may be noticed is into—(1) *Theoretic* or *Didactic* Parables, by which are meant those spoken by Jesus, as *Rabbi* or *Master* with disciples to instruct and train, and including those in Matthew xiii. with some others ; (2) *Evangelic* Parables, or Parables of *Grace*, those spoken by Jesus in the character of *Evangelist* preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom to the poor, and including mainly those recorded by Luke ; and (3) *Prophetic* or *Judicial* Parables, those spoken by Jesus as *Prophet* proclaiming the great truths of the moral government and judgment of God, including those like the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33-41), and the Barren Fig-tree (Luke xiii. 6-9).

18. THE CLASSIFICATION ACCORDING TO HISTORICAL POSITION.—Something may be said in favour of each of these classifications, as well as of others not mentioned. But it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to find its fitting place for each Parable, if the principle of arrangement is taken to be that of *subject*. A certain number of them have at the same time a character distinct from others, some dealing with the Kingdom of God itself, or the new Society as a whole ; others with individuals and their relation to it. Some again have the tone of mercy, forgiveness, and love, as is the case with the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and many more ; while others have the tone of judgment, as is the

case with the Two Sons, the Wicked Husbandmen, the Ten Virgins. It is also to be noticed that some were addressed to the disciples, and others to the multitude; and that some were spoken in answer to the questions of inquirers within or without the circle of the disciples, others for different reasons.

It appears further that so many of them belong to one period in our Lord's ministry, and so many to another; also that so many are given specially by Matthew, and so many by Luke. Thus those recorded in Matthew xiii. go together and belong to the beginning of our Lord's Parabolic Teaching. Then we come upon a number, contained mainly in Luke's Gospel, which seem to have been spoken some months later, and to belong chiefly to the period between the mission of the Seventy and our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem. And again we have a distinct group spoken at the close of His Ministry, and belonging to the time of His last entry into the Holy City. This being the case, it may be enough to group them simply according to *historical position or occasion*, so far as that can be ascertained, without attempting any more elaborate classification.

19. THE THREE HISTORICAL DIVISIONS.—In this way they may be arranged in the three broad divisions of *Early*, *Intermediate*, and *Late*, or Parables of the *First Period*, the *Second Period*, the *Third Period*. Those of the first of these groups are connected with Capernaum and the Lake of Gennesaret. In time they belong to about the middle of our Lord's ministry, or the period when it began to move towards its end. They include

the seven which are given in Matthew xiii., with the addition of Mark's Parable of the *Seed Growing Secretly*, or the *Fruit-bearing Earth* (iv. 26-29). The first Gospel is our chief source for these Parables, but there are parallels in the second and third Gospels. Those of the Second or Intermediate Group belong to a later stage in our Lord's Ministry, to the time between the Mission of the Seventy and His final journey to Jerusalem. Our source for these is the third Gospel. They have no proper parallels in the other Gospels, except the partial parallel between the Lost Sheep of Luke xv. and that of Matthew xviii. 12-13. They include the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 30-37); the Importunate Friend (Luke xi. 5-8); the Rich Fool (Luke xii. 16-21); the Barren Fig-Tree (Luke xiii. 6-9); the Great Supper (Luke xiv. 15-24); the three in Luke's fifteenth chapter—viz., the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Prodigal Son; the two in Luke's sixteenth chapter—viz., the Unjust Steward, and the Rich Man and Lazarus; the Unjust Judge (Luke xviii. 1-8); and the Pharisee and the Publican (Luke xviii. 9-14); with the addition perhaps of the Two Debtors (Luke vii. 41-43); and the Unprofitable Servants (Luke xvii. 7-10), if these are to rank as definite Parables.

Those of the third group belong to the final stage of our Lord's Ministry, the close of His Teaching in Galilee, and the period of His last entrance into Jerusalem. Our chief source for these again is Matthew's Gospel, but with important parallels in Mark and Luke. They are well described as bearing the same relation to the

Earlier Parables that the Discourse of Judgment in Matthew xxiv. bears to the Sermon on the Mount. They include the Unmerciful Servant (Matt. xviii. 23-35); the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt. xx. 1-16); the Two Sons (Matt. xxi. 28-32); the Wicked Husbandmen or Vinedressers (Matt. xxi. 33-45; Mark xii. 1-12; Luke xx. 9-18); the Marriage of the King's Son, or the Royal Wedding-Feast (Matt. xxii. 1-14); the Ten Virgins (Matt. xxv. 1-13); the Talents (Matt. xxv. 14-30); the Pounds (Luke xix. 11-27).

20. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARABLES.—The Parables are of different characters or qualities. Some are doctrinal, dealing with the deep truths of the Kingdom; others are prophetic, dealing with the rejection of faithless Israel, and with the Last Judgment. Some are theocratic, speaking of the Divine Kingdom itself or of Messiah's Reign; others are ethical, speaking of man's duty generally. Some have the note of mercy; others, that of judgment. The Gospels, too, have their peculiar characteristics, marking off the one from the other, and these distinctive qualities of the Gospels are reflected in the Parables which they severally select for record. Mark, indeed, whose preference is to report the mighty *acts* of Christ, gives only a few Parables, and these mostly in brief form. In addition to the one which is peculiar to himself, that of the Seed Growing Secretly (iv. 26-29), he records the Sower (iv. 3-8), the Mustard Seed (iv. 30-32), and the Wicked Husbandmen (xii. 1-12). But Matthew and Luke give each a much larger number, and these are also mostly of distinct types.

21. THE PARABLES IN MATTHEW COMPARED WITH THOSE IN LUKE.—Matthew, as the Evangelist of the Hebrews, showing the fulfilment of the Old Testament in the New, selects chiefly those Parables which are didactic, theocratic, prophetic, or judicial. His Parables speak of the "mysteries" of the Kingdom of Heaven, of the passing away of the old theocracy, the failure and rejection of the Jewish nation, the final judgment. Luke, as the Evangelist of humanity, selects for the most part Parables which speak not of the "mysteries of the Kingdom," but of the great moral duties, and Parables which breathe mercy. He, too, has his Parables of judgment; but mercy appears even in them. The judgment, for example, which is pronounced on the Barren Fig-tree, is tempered by the pleading of the vine-dresser that it may be let alone for yet another year (Luke xiii. 6-9). And as Luke is himself the Evangelist of Jesus as the Friend of Sinners, the Evangelist also of sympathy and compassion, the sympathy and compassion of God towards men and of men towards each other, so his Parables for the most part have the aspect of mercy and grace. It is to him, and to him alone, that we owe the Parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and others in which grace and mercy are the conspicuous qualities. When these two Gospels, too, record the same Parables, or Parables which are closely allied in subject, they do it each according to its own genius. One who has an eye for those finer features of the Gospels compares in this respect Matthew's parable of the Marriage of the King's Son (xxii. 2) with Luke's parable of the Great Supper (xiv. 16). He

points out how in the former "all is of the theocracy; roots itself in the hopes which the Old Testament cherishes, in the promises with which it abounds, ..." and "how characteristic of this Evangelist is the double doom—first of the open foe, and then of the false friend." On the other hand, all is so different in Luke; "no longer a King, but simply a certain man makes a supper; the two judgment acts fall into the back ground; one indeed disappears altogether; while far more is made of the grace and goodness of the giver of the feast, which lead him again and again to send forth his servant that he may gather in the meanest, the most despised, the most outcast to his table." (Trench).

22. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLES.—These priceless words, with all their treasures of heavenly wisdom on the new Kingdom or Society, the grace of Christ, the Divine love and forgiveness, the duty of man and the judgment of God, deserve and demand the most patient and reverent study. No amount of pains or prayer can be too much to bestow upon them. But wisdom is needed in the study of them, and there are two extremes to be avoided in interpreting them. One extreme is to make too much of their details; the other is to make too little of them. Each of the parables is charged with its own lesson, and we shall understand them best if we seek to ascertain what in each case that is; not endeavouring to find some distinct and special significance in each of the circumstances or descriptive touches. They have been used for purposes for which they were never intended, and have been rendered artificial and

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unnatural by many who have neglected this simple rule, and who have expended a mistaken ingenuity in getting doctrine or duty out of the pictorial setting of the discourse. In this respect the parables have been likened to a "splendid house in which there must be passages, not for their own sake, but to lead from one room to another"; to the organ or harp in which there is much that cannot be wanted, but which does not give the music; or to the arrow winged with feathers which seem slight things and of a different make from the rest, "but are yet requisite to make the shaft to pierce, and do both convey it to and penetrate the mark." On the other hand, it is not to be taken for granted that there is never any special meaning in the details. Christ Himself has shown us that in the great parable of the Sower, the birds, the heat, and other things are significant as well as the sower himself, the seed, and the soils.

23. AIDS TO THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLES.—Christ's parabolic teaching can sometimes be read in the light of His *direct* teaching on the same or similar subjects. In some cases, as in the *Sower* and the *Tares*, He has Himself furnished us with the interpretation as well as with the parable. In other cases He has appended words indicating the lesson which He meant the parable to bear. Thus He closes the parable of the Marriage of the King's Son with the sentence, "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt. xxii. 14); and that of the Ten Virgins with the counsel, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh" (Matt. xxv. 13). In

other cases, again, the Evangelist himself prefaces the parable by words pointing to the object with which it was spoken. Thus Luke introduces the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son by an explanation which shows that they were occasioned by the murmuring of the Pharisees against Christ's receiving sinners and eating with them, and were intended as a defence of His grace in so acting (xv. 1, 2). The same Evangelist puts into our hand the key to the parable of the Unjust Judge by stating at the outset that it was spoken "*to this end* that men ought always to pray and not to faint" (xviii. 1). So we are not left without guidance from the Master Himself and His Evangelists in the way to get at His meaning in the parables.

24. THE CLUSTER OF SEVEN IN MATTHEW XIII.—The Evangelists report our Lord's parables, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups. But nowhere have we so large a cluster of these costliest fruits of His teaching as in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. It does not follow, however, that parables which are recorded together were all spoken on the same occasion. The three which make one group of rarest charm and richest grace in Luke's fifteenth chapter, in all probability formed one utterance of the compassionate Friend of publicans and sinners. But it is not so clear that the seven pearls of Christ's parabolic discourse of which this chapter of the first Gospel is the casket, were all strung at one and the same time on one string. Matthew is accustomed to bring together in his narrative words and incidents which are kindred in

subject or in character, although they may belong to different times. The Parable of the Sower comes before the incident with the mother and brethren in Luke's Gospel (viii. 4-8). Those of the Mustard Seed, and the Leaven are given in another connection by Luke (xiii. 18-21) than that in which they appear in Matthew and Mark. We have also instances of Parables such as those of the Talents, the Pounds, and the Labourers in the Vineyard (Matt. xxv. 14; Luke xix. 12; Matt. xx. 1), which, while closely related in subject, are not recorded together, and were not spoken at the same time. Hence it cannot be said with certainty that these seven were all uttered in one discourse. They seem to belong, however, to the same period in our Lord's Ministry; and, whether spoken on the same day or not, they have much in common in character and theme. Some of them have so intimate a connection in subject that we can see at a glance that they go together. The Tares and the Drag-Net, for example, form one pair within the group; the Mustard Seed and the Leaven make a second; and the Hid Treasure and the Pearl, a third. Matthew's report of these Parables is the fullest. Four of the seven, the Tares, the Hid Treasure, the Pearl, and the Drag-Net are recorded only by him. We gather also from verse 36 that the first four were spoken to the multitude, the last three to the disciples. The first four, also, as it would appear, were spoken by the lake; the last three in the house.

25. THE SOWER: ITS CIRCUMSTANCES (Matt. xiii. 1-9; Mark iv. 1-9; Luke viii. 4-8).—As the Changing of the Water into Wine at the marriage

in Cana of Galilee was the "beginning of miracles" which Jesus did (John ii. 11), so the discourse on the Sower was the beginning of the Parables which He spake. As such, it is the great Pattern-parable. It is one of three which are recorded by each of the three Synoptists, the other two being the Mustard Seed and the Wicked Husbandmen. It was delivered on the same day (xiii. 1), on which His "mother and His brethren stood without desiring to speak to Him" (xii. 46). Thus it appears to belong to a memorable day in our Lord's Ministry, the day on which, in answer to the blasphemous charge of the Pharisees that He cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, He spoke of the sin against the Holy Ghost which shall not be forgiven to men (xii. 24-32); the day, too, on which, perhaps, occurred the miracles of the Stilling of the Tempest and the Healing of the Gadarene demoniac (Mark iv. 35-v. 20). The scene was the Sea of Galilee, "the most sacred sheet of water which this earth contains," and somewhere near Capernaum; for in that city most probably was "the house" in which He had been discoursing, and which He had left to find a larger audience by "the sea-side." Here at first He "sat," taking naturally the attitude proper to the Jewish teacher of those days; but as the people were so many, He betook Himself to the boat for greater freedom. So picturesque were the circumstances in which this first of all the Parables was spoken—the boat, held by rope or anchor, swinging with easy motion a little way out; the eager crowds standing on the shelving shore, straining to catch the strange, attractive words; the water lap-

ping with soft rhythm on the pebbly beach ; and the voice of the Master heard through it, Himself seeing but the fringe of His audience, and being seen in His sitting posture only by the nearest lines of hearers. The figures in which He spoke to these listeners were taken from everyday scenes, and may have been suggested by what was immediately beneath their eyes and His at the time. A scholar with a rare gift of graphic narration thus describes what met his view as he gazed on the probable scene of this Parable : " There was the undulating corn-field descending to the water's edge ; there was the trodden pathway running through the midst of it, with no fence or hedge to prevent the seed from falling here and there on either side of it or upon it ; itself hard with constant tramp of horse, mule, and human feet. There was the 'good' rich soil, which distinguishes the whole of that plain and its neighbourhood from the bare hills, elsewhere descending into the lake, and which, where there is no interruption, produces one vast mass of corn. There was the rocky ground of the hillside protruding here and there through the corn-fields, as elsewhere through the grassy slopes. There were the large bushes of thorn—the 'Nabk,' that kind of which tradition says that the Crown of Thorns was woven—springing up like the fruit trees of the more inland parts, in the very midst of the waving wheat."—(Stanley).

26. THE SOWER : ITS TERMS.—The terms of the Parable give us a picture of what might happen at any time with the Galilean or Judean farmer in the sowing of his fields. The tillers of the soil in

those times and lands dwelt together in villages, and "went forth" from these to do their daily work. The fields which they cultivated were often of mixed quality, and neither fenced nor hedged as ours are. They lay open, the boundaries being indicated by stones set up for the purpose, and the pathway not being separate from them, but running right through them, with the wheat growing up to its edge. Thus, when the man whose business it was to sow "went forth" at the proper season to do his work, it was certain that the seed which he scattered would have very different fortunes. Some would fall upon the "wayside," that is, upon the path that went through the field, or along the boundary, and the fate of such seed was clear. They could not penetrate the soil, which was beaten hard by the tread of many feet, and they would be crushed by the heel of the passer by, or picked up and consumed by the birds, whose instinct made them follow the sower in flocks. Others would fall upon "stony places," or rather upon "the rocky parts," such as occur on shelving coasts, not places where the soil was simply mixed with stones, but parts where there was a thin layer of earth covering the solid rock beneath. The fate of such seed would be different. They would get into the soil a little way, and the very thinness of the covering, and the force of the heat that would reach them, would make them spring quickly, and give the promise of a certain and rapid fruitfulness. But all to no purpose. Having no depth of root, the premature shoots would be too tender to bear much, and, as soon as the sun rose, would first become scorched, and then, being unable to draw suffi-

cient moisture from the scanty earth, would speedily wither. Others would fall among thorns, or "upon the thorns" (as the Revised Version puts it), that is, on thorny ground, or soil in which a crop of thorns lay hid. The fate of such seed would differ again from that of the others. They would not only get into the nourishing earth and have a quick, brief growth, but would continue growing till near the point of yielding increase; but then their promise of fruitfulness would be belied, and their life choked by the thorns, which would grow up in deadly power and density along with them. Others, however, would fall on "the good ground," on soil clear of the faults of these three, free of the hardness and imperviousness of the first, the thinness of the second, the foulness of the third; and such seed would have a better fate. Met by nothing to hinder them from being taken in by the soil, from shooting, or from growing even to the point of increase, they would go on to fruitfulness. And their fruitfulness would be of different degrees, according to the varying measures of softness, depth, and cleanness. In some cases the single buried grain would yield thirty (and even in the present reduced condition of things in Palestine men gather crops with thirty-three fold of increase); in others sixty, in others even one hundred. So we read of Isaac in Gerar, that "he sowed in that land, and found in the same year an hundred-fold" (Gen. xxvi. 12). And ancient writers testify to the extraordinary fertility of the Holy Land as it once was, and speak of a yield of a hundred to one, or two hundred and even more in the richer soils.

27. NOTABLE POINTS OF THE FIRST PARABLE.—This pictorial discourse, therefore, has the element of *narrative* which belongs to the true Parable. In this case, however, it is the narrative not of a single, remarkable incident, but of something that takes place from season to season according to the laws of nature under the given circumstances. While it is known as the Parable of the Sower, and is so called by our Lord Himself (xiii. 18), the most prominent things in it are the soils to which the seed is committed and the reception which it meets. Nothing is said of the sower himself beyond the fact that he sowed, and in His explanation of the Parable our Lord makes no mention of him. Hence the Parable is sometimes called also that of the *Divers Soils*. It is to be noticed, too, that the seed appears to be identified both with the *word* which is communicated and with the *person* who hears it. "The sower soweth the word," it is stated in Mark iv. 14; and so in Luke viii. 11, "The seed is the word of God." But in the interpretation Christ says, "This is *he* which received seed by the wayside;" or, better, as the R.V. gives it, "This is *he* who was sown by the wayside" (Matt. xiii. 19). This is explained by the fact that the two are in a certain sense one. In nature it is the seed that reappears in the grain, and so in grace it is the word that reproduces itself in the person who receives it. In one way the seed is the thing sown and the means of the result in the harvest; in another way the seed sown is itself the result seen in a different form in the harvest. "As the seed reproduces itself in the grain, so the living

truth . . . reproduces itself in the heart; and thus as Christ is *the Word* of God, so every Christian is to be *a* word of God, an embodiment of the truth which he has received" (Abbott). But another notable thing, and one touching the essence of the Parable, is the ascending scale in the description of the four soils, in respect both of their natures or qualities and of their treatment of the seed entrusted to them. The first hard, and therefore not allowing the seed to go beyond the surface; the second superior in point of receptiveness, yet providing for the seed only a brief, deceptive growth; the third excelling the former in respect of depth, and giving scope for the seed's life and increase, but under the doom of arrestment at the very point of fruitfulness; the fourth surpassing all others, in giving all that is needful for the full vitality and abundant productiveness of the seed.

28. THE IMPRESSION ON THE HEARERS. —Obvious as the general meaning of the Parable is to us, it was not seen by those who first heard it. The multitude were incapable of taking it in. They had sunk into the condition of their forefathers, whom the prophet described as "waxed gross" of heart, dull of hearing, blind to things spiritual (Matt. xiii. 14, 15). They may have had the dim feeling that the words referred somehow to themselves, but they found them "dark sayings." Even to the disciples, who had some understanding, so that their Lord could say of them, in contrast with the mass, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear" (Matt. xiii. 16), the meaning was so far from being plain that they, and

the Twelve themselves among the number, had to get it explained to them by the Speaker Himself. "And His disciples asked Him," Luke tells us, "saying, What might this parable be?" (viii. 9). "And when He was alone," says Mark, "they that were about Him with the Twelve asked of Him the parable" (iv. 10). And Christ granted their request, unfolding to them in private the application of His words. And the application in the first instance was to themselves and their fellow-Jews.

29. THE IMMEDIATE PURPOSE OF THE PARABLE.—Their lack of understanding arose out of false, pre-conceived ideas of the nature and the destiny of the Kingdom of God. They looked for a kingdom resembling those of earth, for a rapid victory over all that opposed it, and for a quick, triumphant progress of their Messiah to the consummation of His work. There was much in the circumstances of the hour to encourage this expectation. The hostility of the ruling classes indeed had declared itself, and there had been disappointments in their Lord's way. But the people kept by Him in crowds, and popular enthusiasm had risen. The disciples themselves were in danger of being mastered by mistaken anticipations, the result of which might be fatal to their faith and to the duty which was to be theirs. And Christ spoke this Parable in order to deliver them from deceptive expectations, and to instruct them in the fact that His Kingdom was not to come, as they thought, immediately and as by power, but by means of a Divine message and Divine truths which would take time to do their work in the minds and lives of

men, and would meet with different measures of success according to the varying characters of hearers and their diverse attitudes to the word of the Kingdom. "The end of Jesus," says one of our best expositors, "is first to show that He is under no illusion in view of that multitude in appearance so attentive; next, to put His disciples on their guard against the hopes which the present enthusiasm might inspire; lastly, and above all, to fortify His hearers against the perils to which their present religious impressions were exposed" (Godet).

30. THE LARGER LESSONS OF THE PARABLE (Matt. xiii. 18-23; Mark iv. 14-20; Luke viii. 11-15).—The Parable had its occasion, therefore, in the circumstances of the hour, and its immediate application was to the moral condition of the disciples then. But it has larger lessons, lessons of permanent and universal significance, and the terms in which our Lord interprets it make this clear. It means (1) that God's way of establishing His Kingdom on earth is the simple way of bringing the word which speaks of it home to men's minds; (2) that this word is dependent for its results upon the minds to which it is addressed; (3) that these results are as different as men differ in the reception which they give to the word and in the qualities of heart which determine that reception. How great these differences are is shown by a fourfold classification of hearers and results. The first and lowest kind of hearer, the *wayside* hearer, is the man who is spiritually obtuse or insensible. The word reaches indeed the ear of such a hearer, but not his heart. So it passes away from him, and he is as if he never had

heard it. The enemy of the word and of man has in his case an easy victory. The "wicked one" (Matt. xiii. 19), "Satan" (Mark iv. 15), "the devil" (Luke viii. 12), cometh and catcheth away the heavenly word. Imperviousness to Divine things is the characteristic of this class, and the imperviousness is due to lack of the spiritual faculty. The man "understands *it* not," or cannot "take in" the mysteries of the Kingdom, his mind being beaten hard to insensibility by the thoughts of earthly things. The second type, the *rocky-ground* hearer, who is indeed receptive of the word, and has even joy in it, but only "dureth for a while," because he hath "no root in himself," is the thoughtless, impulsive, heady hearer, who exhibits an enthusiasm and gives promise of a righteousness beyond others, but whose superficial nature and hasty faith are unequal to trial. When "persecution," "tribulation," or, as Luke puts it, "temptation" comes, he takes offence, and all his fair show of piety withers. The third type, the *thorny-ground* hearer, who is not only sympathetic to the word and more constant than the other, but carries his religious profession far, and yet comes to nothing, is the man of divided mind, who attempts to give a place both to God and to Mammon, and therefore proves a failure. In this case the power of the word is defeated by worldliness in one or other of its three great forms, the "cares of this world," or driving anxieties about earthly things; the "deceitfulness of riches,"—riches, that is to say, in their power to delude as to the real value of things; and the "lusts of other things," the passion for honour, position, en-

joyment, good living, and the like. So this kind of hearer attains to nothing satisfying in life or in service. He "becometh unfruitful" (Matt. xiii. 22; Mark iv. 19), he brings "no fruit to perfection" (Luke viii. 14). But the fourth type, the "good-ground" hearer, who not only hears the word but "takes it in" and "keeps" it, and allows it to work its perfect work in him, and does all this with an undivided mind, is the true child of the Kingdom, the Christian of "honest and good heart," who seeks first the Kingdom of God, and cultivates its righteousness with no by-ends or divided purpose. Such hearers, and only such, attain to fruitfulness of life and service; and they do it as matter of course, because they are the kind of men they are. They do it, too, "with patience," as Luke expresses it (viii. 15), by which is meant perseveringly; and they do it in a measure which, according to the degree of capacity and diligence, rises from what is good to that which is better, and to the still better. The first type is seen in the Pharisee; the second in the enthusiastic Galileans, who "walked no more with Him" after Christ spoke of the deeper and more trying things of His mission (John vi. 66); the third in Demas, who forsook Paul, "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. iv. 10); the fourth in Nathanael, the "Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile" (John i. 47); in Mary, who "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word" (Luke x. 39); in the Bereans, who were "more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all diligence, examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts xvii. 11).

31. THE TARES: ITS DISTINCTION FROM THE SOWER (Matt. xiii. 24-30).—This Parable is given by Matthew alone. It was spoken in the same circumstances as the former. It was addressed to the same audience, the crowd of Galileans on the shore. As in the first Parable, so here again we have the figure of a sower sowing his field with seed. The sower is again the Son of Man. And again the experience of a farmer is used to illustrate an important truth regarding the Kingdom of God. Otherwise, however, the two Parables differ in several significant points, and they deal with distinct aspects of the Kingdom of God. For one thing, the subject is introduced in a different way. The common formula, and the one employed in the case of the Sower, is "The kingdom of heaven is like." But in the present case it is "the kingdom of heaven is likened" (Matt. xiii. 24), or, more strictly, "was made like," or "became like." Here, therefore, our Lord deals, not with a general truth, but with a definite stage in the history of His Kingdom —a stage already reached, and one likely to cause perplexity to His hearers. He had Himself come and brought the Kingdom to a particular point, and what was involved in this He proceeds to explain by the Parable. A second difference is the view taken of the *seed*. In the Parable of the Sower the seed was the *word*, and it was considered both as the *means* of securing the fruitful grain, and as the *result*, the fruitful grain itself. Here the seed is a figure of the *persons* or characters that are in view, and of these only. A third difference is in the place where the seed is deposited. In the Sower the soil into which

the seed is cast is the mind of the hearer; but in the Tares it is the world itself. And a fourth difference is in the *expectation* that is natural in the one instance and in the other. In the Sower the attention was directed to the difference in the soils, and it was natural there to expect results differing accordingly. But here the attention is directed to the kind of grain sown, and to that as sown in a field which is not described as of diverse qualities of ground. It was pure wheat seed that was sown by the Sower. It was natural, therefore, to expect a crop of pure wheat, and it was a surprise to others, though not to the Sower Himself, that a mixed crop was the actual result.

32. THE TERMS OF THE PARABLE.—The narrative in the Parable is to be taken as teaching in its completeness a great truth in the history of the Kingdom of God. The opening sentence, "the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a *man* which sowed," does not imply that the point of the Parable is only or mainly in what is said of the Sower, but means broadly that the story as a whole is a figure of something that holds good of the Kingdom of God. Only good seed has been sown at the time, and by the proper hand; but by and by it appears that evil seed must also have been sown secretly, and by a malignant hand. The evil seed is called "tares," which is an unhappy rendering. "Darnel" comes nearer what is intended. But no English word exactly suits the original, and so some propose to give the Greek word simply an English turn and call it *zizan*. What is meant is an Eastern plant, closely resembling wheat, but of noxious quality when it is

milled and allowed to get into the bread, bitter to the taste, producing nausea and vertigo, and, if in large quantity, apt even to cause death. When it grows up with the wheat its roots get intertwined with those of the wheat, so that it is difficult to pluck it up without injuring the latter or pulling it up with it. It is so like the wheat that the people of the East themselves and many good scholars have taken it, though without sufficient reason as it would seem, to be a degenerate kind of wheat or barley, the result of unfavourable conditions, bad seasons, and excessive rains. The likeness continues till the wheat is in the ear, and then any eye can see the difference. "In those parts where the grain has *headed out*," says an experienced traveller, "the tares have done the same, and there a child cannot mistake them for wheat or barley; but where both are less developed, the closest scrutiny will often fail to detect them." (Thomson, *Central Palestine and Phœnicia*, p. 395.) So it is said here, "But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also" (v. 26). At this point the fact became painfully patent to "the servants of the householder," who knew that only good wheat had been or could have been sown by their master. They came to him in their astonishment first with one question and then with another. Their first anxiety, in which there is almost a shade of doubt whether something out of the way had happened with him in his sowing, is to know how these tares had come there. His answer is emphatically that they are there by the act of an enemy, and no other. Their second impulse is at

once to get his order to gather out the tares, that the wheat may be had in its purity. He arrests them by pointing to the danger of rooting up the wheat itself with the tares, and to the fact that, though not now, yet at last the time will come when it will be safe, without risk of hurt to the wheat, to gather out the tares, and when each will be dealt with according to its quality.

33. CHRIST'S INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE (Matt. xiii. 36-43).—Christ Himself explains this Parable, as He did that of the Sower. The explanation is given only to the disciples (probably including others besides the Twelve), the people being now dismissed, and the Speaker having returned to "the house," the one out of which He had come when He made His way to the lake—which may, perhaps, have been the one in Capernaum to which He was accustomed to repair, and in which Peter dwelt (Matt. iv. 13; viii. 14). It bore that by the Sower He meant Himself, the "Son of Man," the title here used being His own chosen name for Himself, the one that set Him forth as the Saviour and Kinsman of men, expressing both His distinction from other men and His identification with the race of man. It bore, too, that by the "field" He meant "the world," the whole realm of humanity, nothing less than that being claimed by Him for the purposes of His work and the extent of His Kingdom. It explained the two kinds of seed to denote two opposite qualities of men—on the one hand, "the children of the Kingdom," those who belonged to it and were of its quality; the other, the "children of the devil," those

who drew from Him what they were in kind. Further, it made it clear to the hearers that the mixed condition of things which seems so strange at present is neither of Christ's purpose nor to His satisfaction, but is the work of His and His Kinsman's enemy, the devil, who "at once mimics and counterworks the work of Christ" (Trench); that it is nevertheless to be borne with in the interest of the righteous themselves, and that the time for its rectification is not to be hastily anticipated by man; that the present system of things has its predetermined end, and that this time of the end is the time of the separation, when the two kinds of men who have stood together for a period shall go each their own way that they may stand in their own lot. Christ declares this act of separation to be His own act; the act proper to Him in His position as the Son of Man—a stupendous claim to be made by the Speaker, the Son of Man who had not where to lay His head! Nor are the terms in which He speaks of the destinies prepared for the two kinds of men less to be noted than the claim itself. The destiny of them "which do iniquity" is expressed as that of being "cast into a furnace of fire," where "shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth"—words of most solemn moment and unmistakable terror which, while they point to nothing material or physical, being strong figures of speech, are yet figures of real, just, and terrible penalties of the after-life, being familiar Jewish metaphors for the retributions of Gehenna, the Hell of the Jews. The destiny of the just, on the other hand, is then to "shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father,"—

words of grace which do not simply express the idea of a reward for the righteous, but the fact that the time of their obscuration will then be past; and that all that they were in the hidden glory of their nature and life will appear in the clear radiance of a perfection not to be mistaken by any eye, not to be confused with aught else.

34. THE SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—There are things in this Parable, as in others, which are misunderstood when they are taken to convey distinct and separate lessons. One of these is the phrase, "when men slept," which is sometimes interpreted as expressing the idea of *carelessness* or *negligence*. It is true that the time when one is neglectful and at his ease is the time when evil finds its opportunity. But that is not what is in view here, the phrase meaning nothing more than "at night," and indicating simply that the enemy sowed the evil seed *secretly*, so that no one could know anything of it at the time or for long after. The question as to the scope of the Parable turns very much on the sense to be given to the words, "the field is the world." Some understand by this the *world* as outside the Church and distinct from it; in which case the Parable would speak only of the commingling of good and evil men in common society, and of that as a thing for Christians to acquiesce in, with all the trials which it may bring them. But the real scope of the Parable is something more definite than this. It looks not to the mixture of Christians and non-Christians in the outside world, but to the mixture of true Christians and spurious Christians in the Kingdom of God

itself. Many things go to show this to be the case; the selection, *e.g.*, not of thorns or any similar growth as the figure, but of the *darnel*, the one plant that is so like the wheat that the one is taken for the other through a long period of their common existence; the fact that the presence of the tares is explained as an *after*-sowing due to an enemy, a sowing *on* the good seed—which suggests that what is in view is something connected with the true, borrowing their appearance and intruding among them; and above all, the decisive statement that at the end these tares are to be "gathered *out of the kingdom*" itself. The Parable, therefore, speaks of the mixture of the true and the false in the Christian society itself. What it deals with is the fact that this is not an untoward accident, but a part of God's plan; not a thing for us to stumble at or to attempt to interfere with by wild and hasty action, but a thing which God has His reason for suffering. And that reason is no mere difficulty of distinguishing the one from the other (for the tares are allowed for a time to go on growing with the wheat even after the difference is obvious), but concern for "the children of the kingdom" themselves, the risk of checking their growth and hurting them while yet unripe. The first thing, therefore, with the King in this new Kingdom is the future of its genuine children; for which He bears with much and delays His judgment until they attain their destined purity, ripeness, and fruitfulness. Beyond this the present Parable does not look. Each Parable has its own particular scope, to which it is limited; and each leaves questions unanswered which do not belong

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to its immediate purpose. The Parable of the Sower, being intended to treat only of the difference in the kinds of soils, says nothing of the possibility of any one of the soils becoming other than it is at present. And in like manner it is not within the scope or purpose of this Parable of the Tares to say anything about the possibility of a change in the plants themselves. But other words of the Lord Jesus were spoken with the gracious object of assuring us that it does remain possible for the Tares to become wheat, for the counterfeit members of His Kingdom to be changed into the genuine and profitable.

35. THE MAIN LESSON OF THE PARABLE.—The appearance of spurious and unworthy members in the circle of Christ's first followers would be a surprise and a stumbling-block to His genuine disciples. The Parable was spoken to arm them against this mistake, and to instruct them in the wisdom of patient waiting on God's way and God's time. It does not deal directly with questions which have been so variously and often so disastrously answered in the course of history, questions regarding the exercise of discipline by the Church, or the right of the State to secure by the civil arm the purity of the Church. But in the words, "Let both grow together till the harvest," it puts before us a great principle, which should determine our attitude and action in regard to all difficulties created by the present imperfect condition of the Christian society—the principle that patience is better than heady, inconsiderate zeal in dealing with evil things and unworthy men in the Kingdom of God. "The

Parable," says a foreign writer, "shows the deep wisdom of Jesus, forbidding all violent attacks against evil as an interference, not only with the Divine order of judgment, but with the order of the earthly development in good and evil." Its great lesson is one concerning the *spirit* or *disposition* to be cherished in view of all the perplexities and difficulties connected with the presence of corrupt elements and unworthy members in the Christian Community—the spirit, not of impatience or haste, but of forbearance, endurance, and a hopefulness which looks to the end.

36. THE MUSTARD SEED: ITS PLACE AND CONNECTION (Matt. xiii. 31, 32; Mark iv. 30-32; Luke xiii. 18, 19).—This is one of the limited number of Parables which find a place in each of the three Synoptic Gospels. The terms also are very much the same in the three records, only that, while Matthew and Mark enlarge both on the smallness of the seed and the magnitude of the growth, Luke leaves the former unnoticed. The Parable is not given, however, in exactly the same connection in each of the Synoptics. The first two Gospels introduce it in one paragraph with the Sower. Luke on the other hand, brings it in after the narrative of the "woman which had a spirit of infirmity," and the indignation of the ruler of the synagogue because the healing work was done on the Sabbath. Some suppose that this Parable and that of the Leaven were spoken twice. However it may be with this particular case, there is no improbability in the supposition that these matchless parabolic sayings of our Lord were delivered on more than

one occasion. The Mustard Seed, again, the Leaven, and the Seed Growing Secretly make a series of three, all treating of the Kingdom of God under the aspect of its *increase* or *progress*. The connection between two of these three, the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, is so close that they obviously form a distinct pair. They both deal with the future of the Kingdom, the one with its increase *extensively* the other with its increase *intensively*. It should also be noticed that, as regards the figure employed in it, this Parable has interesting points of contact with memorable words of the Old Testament prophets. Daniel, *e.g.*, had spoken of Nebuchadnezzar and the kingdom of Babylon, under the image of a "tree in the midst of the earth" (iv. 10-32). Ezekiel, also, had described the Assyrian kingdom, and with it the Egyptian, under the figure of a cedar in Lebanon (xxxi. 3-9); and the same prophet had used the same figure of the cedar tree, with the bringing down of the high tree and the exaltation of the low tree, to set forth the contrasted destinies of the haughty secular kingdoms and the Kingdom of God (xvii. 22-24).

37. THE MUSTARD SEED: ITS TERMS.—The Mustard of which the Parable speaks is best understood as the common mustard plant. The terms, indeed, in which its growth is described may appear at the first glance too large for this. It is represented as becoming a tree with branches capacious enough to make a resting-place and a shelter for the birds of the air. This has been felt to go so far beyond what is literally true of the common mustard, which at its best is not a tree, but

only a bush or herb, that some have thought that what is intended must have been a Syrian tree, known as the *Khardal*, which grows to the height of twenty-five feet, and is described by travellers who know it as having "a pleasant though strong aromatic taste, exactly resembling mustard," and as producing, if taken in any quantity, "a similar irritability of the nose and eyes to that which is caused by taking mustard." It is very doubtful, however, whether this tree really flourished, or could flourish, in the districts about the Lake of Gennesaret. Those well versed in such matters pronounce it rather to have been "one of the many tropical plants whose northern limit is in these sultry nooks by the Dead Sea, and which spread no farther north." The common mustard, in point of fact, best fits the case, and the terms in which it is described are to be taken, not as scientific terms (which would have been out of place), but as popular terms, suited to familiar Jewish ways of thought and speech. It had two peculiarities which every eye could notice. Its seed was so tiny that it was popularly spoken of as the least of all seeds. Not that it was absolutely so (for the seeds of the poppy and the rue, for instance, were smaller still), but that it was regarded as such among the common garden herbs or plants that the Jew had ordinarily to handle. It had become, indeed, a proverb among the Jews, and our Lord Himself uses it in its common proverbial force when He speaks of having faith "as a grain of mustard seed" (Luke xvii. 6). On the other hand, its growth was so great as to appear to be out of all proportion to the diminutive beginning. Travellers

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describe it as growing to eight, nine, or even twelve feet high. One tells us that he has seen it "in the rich plains of Akkar as tall as the horse and his rider." Another mentions that as he was looking on some tall stalks, seven and nine feet high, "a bird came and perched on a branch and sang." The point of the figure, therefore, is not the disproportion which holds generally between seed and outgrowth, but the disproportion that holds particularly between the *mustard* seed and its outgrowth. Other seeds, such as the acorn or the seedling of the cedar, are small in comparison with the majestic result. But there was something peculiarly strange and surprising to the Jew in the case of the mustard, which, being itself a mere herb, yet grew to dimensions like those of a tree. So this common garden growth, which any Jew could observe, was the fittest figure of an increase so large as to seem incredible, proceeding from a beginning small even to utter insignificance.

38. THE MUSTARD SEED: ITS MEANING.—Though the Divine Speaker gave no explanation of this Parable, its meaning is sufficiently clear. It lies in the one quality of the mustard that is specifically dealt with—its power of growth, and of growth to vast dimensions, notwithstanding its diminutiveness in its initial stage. Other qualities of the mustard—"its heat, its fiery vigour, the fact that only when bruised it gives out its best virtues," are not in view here, and, therefore, we cannot say that it is intended to teach *how* the Kingdom is to prevail, namely, by the truth of a crucified Redeemer being made the "power of God unto salvation" (Trench).

Its object is to convey the fact that the Kingdom of God has an assured future; that, small and obscure as it is in its beginnings, it shall yet cover the earth. It is not certain that its scope goes beyond this broad fact. It is possible, however, that something is meant by the description of the "birds of the air" as coming and *lodging* in the branches, whether in the sense of nesting there, or (which is rather the case) in the sense of perching there for food or shelter; especially as the prophets, who use the symbol of the tree, have introduced the same feature, Daniel speaking of "the fowls of the heaven" dwelling in its branches (iv. 12), and Ezekiel of "all fowl of every wing" as dwelling in the shadow of the branches of the goodly cedar (xvii. 23). The latter prophet, indeed, in saying also of the Assyrian kingdom that "all the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs," explains the sense of the figure to be that, "under his shadow dwell all *great nations*" (xxxi. 6, 12). Here too, therefore, it may be meant not only that the Kingdom of God, at present so insignificant, has that in it which ensures it a mighty increase, but that it will in due time take the nations of the earth within it, and make them sharers of its good. The opportuneness of the Parable is obvious. The disciples needed it. For the Kingdom of God, as they yet saw it embodied in the Person of their Master, the lowly Nazarene, and in a handful of poor Jews like themselves, seemed a thing staggeringly insignificant and beneath all their expectations. They needed it all the more that the Parables of the Sower and the Tares had given so strong indication of the discourage-

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ments and difficulties of the Kingdom. These were almost Parables of despair, as they have been called, looking to which these men might have formed the gloomiest anticipations of the future of the Kingdom ; and this Parable was spoken to give them the hope of a mighty, world-embracing victory for the Kingdom, notwithstanding its present smallness, and all obstacles and disappointments.

39. THE LEAVEN (Matt. xiii. 33 ; Luke xiii. 20, 21).—This Parable is omitted by Mark ; but is given by Matthew and Luke, and given by both immediately after the Mustard Seed. The leaven commonly used by the Jew was a portion of old, fermented dough, which was put into the new dough before baking, and acted like our yeast. So it is here said to be taken by the woman who was making the bread, and *hidden* in the meal she was handling. The quantity of meal is given as "three measures,' which made an *ephah*—perhaps about three or four of our pecks. The leaven is further to be understood as left, when once put into the meal, to do its work of changing the tough, insipid mass, fermenting it by its own fermentation, and making it light and palatable. This it continues to do in secrecy and quiet until the whole is leavened. The figure is a simple and homely one, but of great suggestion.

40. THE LEAVEN : SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—As in other cases, so here, one great truth is illustrated, and the illustrative thing is the *leaven* itself. Other things in the Parable are there only for descriptive purposes. The "woman" is introduced simply because it is a woman's work that is in view ; not as a type of the Church, or the

Divine Wisdom, or the Holy Spirit as the Agent of all renewal, as some misread it. So, too, the particular number of measures of meal has no significance. It has been taken as a symbol of the completeness of the work in question, as pointing to the three great constituents of the individual life—body, soul, and spirit; or to the three great divisions of society—the family, the State, the Church; or to the three great divisions of the human race—the children of Shem, Ham, and Japheth; or to the three great races known to those then addressed—Jews, Samaritans, Greeks. But the mention of an ephah or three measures in the case of Sarah's kneading (Gen. xviii. 6), in that of Gideon's unleavened cakes (Judges vi. 19), and in that of Hannah's presentation of the child Samuel to Eli (1 Sam. i. 24), seems to show that this was a usual quantity for one baking, it being customary to bake at once what would serve for some days. The measures, therefore, appear to be given as three simply because that was the ordinary quantity. The point, then, on which the whole Parable turns is the leaven itself, and that as a thing working within the mass, and in due time changing the whole. The leaven, indeed, being itself a sour or corrupt thing, appears in Scripture usually as a symbol of evil. The Israelites were forbidden to eat leavened bread at the Passover season (Exod. xiii. 3), or to make even meal offerings or sacrifices of thanksgiving of it (Lev. ii. 11; Amos iv. 5, R.V.). So in the New Testament it is a symbol of the corrupt teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt. xvi. 11, 12), of the hypocrisy of the former (Luke xii. 1), of malice and

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wickedness (1 Cor. v. 8), of evil influence (Gal. v. 9). Hence it is urged by some that here, too, it must be used in the evil sense, as a symbol and prophecy of difficulties and obstacles coming upon the Kingdom of God in the form of corruption, in doctrine and in life, within itself. But even under the Levitical law restriction in the use of leaven was not absolute. The wave-loaves of fine flour were to be baken with leaven (Lev. xxiii. 17, R.V.). The same figure, too, is in various cases applied in very different senses; the *lion*, *e.g.*, is an emblem at once of the devil (1 Peter v. 8) and of Christ (Rev. v. 5), and the dove is a sign of two kinds of simplicity, good and evil (Matt. x. 16; Hosea vii. 11). Further, our Lord expressly declares here that the *Kingdom of Heaven* is that which He compares at present to leaven. Thus the leaven is introduced here in respect of its action for good within the mass.

41. THE LEAVEN: MEANING OF THE PARABLE.—The Parable, therefore, deals again with the future of the Kingdom of God. Its lesson is that this Kingdom, so insignificant and obscure at first as to be like a little bit of leaven hidden in the quantity of dough, is yet a new transforming force, which will ultimately permeate the whole mass, and make it a new thing. It will do this hiddenly and unobtrusively, yet certainly, so that at last the result will be manifest. It will do this, as leaven does its work, by diffusing itself without noise or observation through the mass, and changing its character by imparting to it its own qualities. Its application properly is to the transforming power of the Kingdom of God in and upon society or the

community. It is a just inference that what holds good of the society holds good also of the individual, and that the Kingdom of God, received by a man, will in like manner renew his whole nature and life. While addressed to the people, it was meant for the special encouragement of the disciples. It bid them hope that, small and unpromising as the beginning seemed, and great as were the obstacles indicated by those "mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" which were first opened to them by their Lord, that Kingdom would yet expand, till it took possession of society and renewed it. The Mustard Seed, therefore, has its complement in the Leaven. The one sets forth the Kingdom of God as a visible body, a society growing from small to great, and at last extending itself over the earth; the other sets it forth as a hidden spiritual force, acting inwardly upon humanity, working from within outwards, penetrating society more and more, and at last making it like itself.

42. THE HID TREASURE (Matt. xiii. 44).—In Matthew's Gospel the Parable of the Leaven is followed by a statement that on the occasion in view "Jesus spake unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them" (xiii. 34). The Evangelist sees in this, as in so many things, a fulfilment of the Old Testament (xiii. 35). He represents this action of Jesus as answering to the announcement made by the prophet, in one of the Psalms, of his purpose to speak in parable and dark sayings of old in singing of the ancient history of Israel and its meaning to his own generation (Ps. lxxviii. 2). The Parable of the Hid Treasure, then,

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opens a new series. For we learn from Matt. xiii. 36 that it was spoken, along with those that follow, not to the multitude, who were now sent away, but to the inner circle of the disciples. It is so akin to the Parable of the Pearl of Great Price that these two again make a distinct pair. They illustrate an entirely new aspect of the Kingdom of God, and they do this each in its own particular way. They set this Kingdom forth, not as a corporate thing, a community or fellowship that is to extend over earth, nor as an inward force that is to conquer and transform society, but as a thing to be personally acquired. And being addressed to the disciples, who were already so far in possession of the Kingdom, they unfolded to them its incomparable worth for each of them individually. The first of the two turns upon a case of frequent occurrence in Eastern life, the finding of treasure-trove. The unsettled condition of society in Eastern lands, and the want of those methods of investing money to which we are accustomed, made the possession of property a very precarious thing. It is said that rich men often divided their wealth into three parts, using one part for their daily maintenance or for trade, turning another into jewels, which they could easily keep about them, and burying the third in the ground. In times of war, sudden raids, popular uprisings, changes of rulers, and the like, it was customary to hide one's treasure in field or garden ; and in many cases, in consequence of the death or absence of the owner, or the loss of the marks of indication, the treasure would remain hidden until some lucky chance discovered it to some stranger The idea of

hid treasure, therefore, had a great hold of the Eastern mind; magicians were supposed to be capable of directing one to the coveted spot; and men were so possessed by the thought of coming thus easily into riches that they often gave up all regular work in favour of this attractive quest. The Old Testament refers to it in such passages, as Job iii. 21; Prov. ii. 4. Nor is it unknown in our own day. "There are many persons," says one who lived long in the East, "digging for hid treasure all over the land, and not a few spend their last farthing in those efforts" (Thomson).

43. THE HID TREASURE: SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—The incident forming the groundwork of this Parable, therefore, is one, the force of which would be instantly caught by a Jewish audience. It is the case of a man at work in a field, who suddenly strikes buried wealth, sees at a glance its value, and for joy at his unexpected good fortune goes at once, eagerly and without delay, and parts with all he possesses in order to secure it, because he recognises it will be more to him than all else. The teaching of the Parable is not to be sought in such of its circumstances as the man's *hiding* the treasure again. He does this only in order to keep it safe until he can make his title to it certain by purchasing the field itself; and it is beyond the purpose of this detail to take it to refer, *e.g.*, to the "tremulous fear" which may be felt in the "first moments that the truth is revealed to a soul . . . lest the blessing found should, by some means or other, escape again" (Trench). Neither does any special significance belong to the *field* itself, as if it were the

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symbol of Scripture or of the visible Church as the depository of the truth. Nor is it in place to raise any question about the morality of the man's conduct in keeping his find a secret till he should have law on his side. The man's act is described not with regard to its being right or wrong, but simply as an evidence of his eagerness and determination to make what has come so unexpectedly in his way his own. The thing which the Parable is designed to illustrate is the inestimable worth of the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom of God, it means, is the Chief Good of Man,—the one true blessing of life, the thing which is of incomparably greater worth than all things else, which each man must acquire for himself personally, and which can be acquired only by the sacrifice of other things.

44. THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE (Matt. xiii. 45, 46).—The companion Parable is not less fitted than the Hid Treasure to appeal to Jewish hearers and set forth the Kingdom of God as the one Supreme Good. For it turns upon the worth of *pearls*, and in these ancient times and those Eastern lands the pearl had a value surpassing all our modern ideas. The ancient Roman writer, Pliny, states that pearls held the first and highest place among all things of price. It was not every day that a perfect pearl could be obtained. But when one was found, it fetched almost any price. Queen Cleopatra is said to have possessed two pearls which were worth each some £80,000 of our money. A certain class of men made it their business to travel in quest of these rarities, and they

required to be sagacious, patient men, with an eye trained to recognise the many small imperfections in colour or in shape which took vastly from the value of pearls. The Holy Land being in the line of one of the great highways of commerce, the caravan of such a merchant would be no infrequent spectacle in the neighbourhood of the Sea of Galilee. The Parable, then, puts the case of one of these skilled merchant-traders, travelling from place to place in quest not of any sort of thing that might pass for a pearl, but of "goodly" pearls, pearls of rare purity and beauty. At last he comes upon one which he sees to be free from any flaw and of extraordinary value; one altogether peerless. Resolved to make it his own at any price, he at once sells all that he has, not his store of pearls only, but his whole possessions, and purchases it. The object of his many anxious journeyings is at last attained, and his business so far forth is finished.

45. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—This Parable gives the same general view of the Kingdom of God as the former one. It sets it forth as Man's Supreme Good, the final object of all his seeking. It illustrates again its incomparable value, describing it as a thing worth all that a man possesses. It presents it further as something which one has to secure for himself, not simply a fellowship or society which is to extend over earth and in which he may be included, nor yet simply a force within society the transforming power of which may touch him as a unit of the community; but as a thing which he has to seek and acquire for himself, and which he can acquire only by readiness to give up all else for it. That

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the acquisition is spoken of in terms of a *buying* is in no sense inconsistent with the fact that the Kingdom is yet a gift of grace. The expression is not strange to Scripture. In the Old Testament we read of *buying* the truth (Prov. xxiii. 23), and of *buying* "wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah lv. 1). So in the New Testament, the counsel of the Church of Laodicea is to *buy* of its Risen Head "gold refined by fire" (Rev. iii. 18); and in the Parable of the Virgins, the foolish five are advised to *buy* for themselves the oil they need (Matt. xxv. 9). In all such cases the figure looks only to the human side of the transaction, and is not intended to illustrate the Divine. So here the *purchase* of the pearl is not meant to say anything for or against the truth elsewhere taught, that the Kingdom of heaven is a thing of grace which comes to us only by the free bestowal of God. It points simply to the disposition on man's part which has the promise of the Divine gift; and it means further that where that exists, the gift will not fail to come. The whole-hearted seeker is certain at last to find the Kingdom.

46. DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE HID TREASURE AND THE PEARL.—But while the Hid Treasure and the Pearl both express the same general truths, they do this with a difference. In the one case the man is not engaged in the search for treasure, nor is he even thinking of it, but is occupied with other things, and comes upon it unexpectedly. In the other, the man is seriously and deliberately engaged in the quest for "goodly pearls," has made it the very business of his life, has traversed

lands for the purpose. In the one we have a man of whose aims no indication is given. In the other we have a man of earnest purpose and lofty aim, caring only for pearls of real worth, bent on getting such, and able to appreciate the best when he sees it. This, then, seems to be the point of distinction, that while the Kingdom of God is of inestimable value to all who find it, and a thing to be had only in the way of self-sacrifice, it does not come to all precisely in the same manner, or under the same circumstances. To some it comes as a joyful surprise; to others as a success long desired, a welcome discovery long looked for. Some find it in the midst of toil for other things, with thoughts preoccupied, and hearts not set upon it. Others find it in the course of a distinct and earnest search for it, when seeking in one thing and in another the Supreme Good of life. The discoverer of the Hid Treasure has his representatives in the Nathanaels, seen of Christ under the fig-tree, all unknown to themselves (John i. 48); in women like the Samaritan, to whom He reveals Himself while they have no thought of His presence (John iv. 26); in the outcasts of society and the aliens to the Church; in the many who have been made ignorant or indifferent by miserable circumstance or unbrotherly handling; in the victims of hopeless poverty, incapable of looking beyond the present hour, to whom the knowledge of the Friend of Sinners and the light of better things come when they dream not of them. The finder of the Pearl has his representatives in the Pauls, whose labours for righteousness are at last crowned with the discovery of that for which they

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count all things loss (Phil. iii. 8); in anxious students of the prophets, like the man of Ethiopia, who sat in his chariot and read and enquired (Acts viii. 27); in the souls in all lands and times, that have been simple, sincere seekers after truth and the chief good of man.

47. THE DRAG-NET (Matt. xiii. 47-50).—The Parable of the Drag-Net so much resembles that of the Tares that we might have expected Matthew to place them together, as he does with the Mustard Seed and the Leaven, and again with the Treasure and the Pearl. Perhaps the Drag-Net is reserved for the last place in the series, because it fixes the eye so distinctly upon the end of the Kingdom, the final consummation and judgment. The figure is no longer that of a farmer with his seed, but that of a fisherman with his net—a figure singularly appropriate, if the Parable was spoken by the Sea of Galilee. The net in question is the large net, known among us as the *seine*, which is simply a modification of the name it has in Greek. The Jews had their small hand-net, which is referred to when it is said of Jesus that "he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea" (or, throwing it about in the sea) (Mark i. 16). But here, as in the Miracle of the Draught of Fishes (John xxi. 6), it is the big, hauling net, a net of great length, made to sweep the bottom of the sea, part sunk by leads deep into the water, and part kept floating near the surface by corks or bladders. It was meant to gather fish in masses: and, when let out to its full extent, its ends were drawn together, and it was dragged to land with all

that it enclosed. It took in everything that was not small enough to get through its meshes, and when it was hauled to shore the fishermen examined its contents, keeping the sound and saleable fish, and throwing away the offensive and worthless. In the present case the net is described as including *bad* fish as well as *good*. The term "bad," which is employed here, means, properly speaking, *putrid*, that is to say, fish which were dead before they were caught, and which are, therefore, wholly unfit for food. But here it may be meant to denote all which for any reason were of no use or value. "As illustrating this expression," says Canon Tristram, "we may observe that the greater number of the species taken on the lake are rejected by the fishermen, and I have sat with them on the gunwale while they *went through their net*, and threw out into the sea those that were too small for the market, or were considered unclean." It is this large drag-net that is also referred to in "the burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see," when he said of the wicked man and the many oppressed ones that are more righteous than he, "he taketh up all of them with the angle, he catcheth them in his net, and gathereth them in his drag: therefore he rejoiceth and is glad. Therefore he sacrificeth unto his net, and burneth incense unto his drag; because by them his portion is fat, and his meat plenteous" (Hab. i. 1, 15-17).

48. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—This Parable is also one regarding the Kingdom of God. Its immediate subject is not the Church, or any question of discipline in the Church, but the condition of

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things which is presented in the larger society of the Kingdom of God as it exists now, and this specially in view of its future. The kind of net indicates the sweep of the Kingdom of God in its present work. It leaves nothing out that can be gathered into it; it gathers in masses; and it gathers "of every kind," by which is meant not of every nationality or race, but of every sort and character, of all different moral qualities. For the phrase, as applied to the *net*, points not to the different scientific species of the fish, but to their differences in use and value. The subject, therefore, is so far the same as in the Tares—viz., the present mixture of good and evil, worthy and worthless, in the Kingdom of God; and the fact that the separation is to be made neither *now* nor by the hands of man. Were there no distinction between the lessons of the two parables it would be nothing strange. For it would be natural that our Lord, as was the way with other Jewish teachers, should give more than one illustration of the same truth. But there is a difference between the two. Both convey the lesson of patience and hope on the part of the disciples, and both point to the final separation. But the net concentrates attention on the *end*. In the Tares much is suggested of the obstacles and evil influences to which the Kingdom of God is subject now. In the Net little is said, or even hinted, of these things, and the mind is taken direct to the final separation. Our Lord's own explanation, so far as He suggests one, touches this point and only this. The great fact of a judgment to come when the "net is filled," and the work appointed for the Kingdom of God to

do on earth is done, is the burden of the Parable. The deliberateness of the judgment is perhaps indicated by the figure of the men *sitting* down to deal with the haul of fishes. This certain, deliberate sifting out, which is to follow the present indiscriminate gathering, being thus the great subject, the Parable makes a solemn and appropriate close to Matthew's series of seven. And its special lesson was perhaps to the disciples themselves—a lesson of warning to them not to presume on their present association with Christ in His kingdom, but to look to the sifting-time of the future, and labour so to use their fellowship with Him now as to be able to stand the test of that day.

49. THE SEED GROWING SECRETLY, OR THE FRUIT-BEARING EARTH (Mark iv. 26-29). —This Parable, which is given by Mark alone, and is the only one peculiar to him, goes naturally with the seven in Matthew xiii. It is one of the three which speak of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God in terms of a sower's work. It takes in the second Gospel the place occupied by the Parable of the Tares in the first Gospel. It is entirely distinct, however, from that Parable, and conveys a different lesson. It is more akin to the Parable of the Sower, and, when originally delivered, it may perhaps have been spoken immediately after it. It illustrates an aspect of the Kingdom of God hitherto unnoticed, and of great importance to practical duty and to just ideas of God's ways. The picture which it presents is that of a farmer who is supposed to have done one bit of work which belongs to him to do, namely, that of casting the seed into the soil.

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This being finished, his part is done for the time being, and he goes about in the ordinary routine of existence, contentedly sleeping and rising, making no attempt to hasten the growth of the seed, but leaving it to the natural operation of the forces hidden in the soil. Meantime, it passes through changes, all unknown to him and all unaided by him, under the spontaneous action of the earth which has received it. It goes on growing thus, without any interference on his part, through all the stages of its natural development in blade, ear, and full corn in the ear. It is for this last that he first sowed and then stood aside as one who can only wait; but so soon as the full corn appears, he recognises that the time has come again for activity on his part. At once, "when the fruit is ripe" (R.V.), or "alloweth," he "putteth forth the sickle" (R.V.) The time of harvest having arrived, he applies himself forthwith to the work of harvest. No more familiar scene could have been selected for the purpose of illustrating one of the deep "mysteries of the kingdom of God." Yet, though the Parable is one of singular simplicity as well as beauty, it is by no means easy to define its precise point. Different views are taken of what part of the Parable really makes its kernel, and different constructions are accordingly put upon its scope. So it is variously described as the Parable of the *Seed Growing Secretly*, the Parable of *The Blade, the Ear, and the Full Corn*, or the Parable of the *Fruit-bearing Earth.*

50. THE IMMEDIATE INTENTION OF MARK'S PARABLE.—The heart of the Parable is the state-

ment that "the earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear" (R.V.). What is said of the farmer himself is by way of contrast to this. His first action is nothing more than the scattering of the seed, the simple act of committing it to the earth. Then there is no active intervention on his part till the time of harvest is reached. In the long interval he takes the attitude of one who looks on and waits; not carelessly, or with an idle, uninterested mind, but patiently and hopefully, with the consciousness that his part is so far done, that much must be left to the soil to do, and that the end is certain. And the earth does what it is expected to do. It does it *spontaneously*, without the application of any external force on his side. It does it effectively, and it does it continuously to the desired end; so that, in virtue of this unforced and unaided action of the soil, the seed developes first into the blade, and then into the ear, and at last comes back to the expectant farmer as the ripe grain. The primary thing here, therefore, is not the sower and his sowing, and the point of the Parable does not turn upon the question as to who is to be understood by the "man" who casts the seed into the ground. Neither do the seed and the forces which are wrapped up in it make the immediate subject, although it is true that seed and soil and sunshine and rain must all co-operate to the attainment of harvest. But the central thing here is the *earth* itself, which receives the seed from the sower's hand, with the forces stored in it and the part assigned to them in the making of the result. And

the Parable seems to have been spoken with the immediate intention of rescuing the disciples themselves from another mistaken idea of the future of the Divine Kingdom, which might act harmfully upon their minds, and unfit them for their vocation. It was natural to them, with their inherited Jewish notions, not only to think that the consummation of the Kingdom must come at once, but that it would come by some forceful, conclusive act of Christ Himself. By this simple, vivid Parable He intimated to them that it was not according to the analogy of other things either that the Kingdom should be so speedily established as they imagined, or that it should be brought to its completion by any summary act of His. His part was to plant it in the society of Israel; and this being done by His Teaching and Preaching, its future had to be left to the measured action of the moral forces which operate in society. It was a new element or vital principle which He was to introduce into the large life of humanity. Being introduced, it was to be left to work according to the laws which regulate life, and to be acted upon by those other elements and influences which make humanity what it is, and among which it is cast. Its end was certain, but its progress towards that end could not be hastened by external means or acts of power. *His* part was to wait till the course designed for it—a course which had to follow its own spiritual laws—was completed. *Their* part was in like manner to wait, giving way to no exaggerated, impatient, or unreasonable anticipations of its future.

51. LESSONS AND RELATIONS OF MARK'S

PARABLE.—The most pertinent lesson of the Parable therefore is this,—that the Kingdom of God, having nothing of the character of a secular or political movement, but being a spiritual force implanted in humanity, submits itself to the action of the moral and social forces inherent in humanity, and works through these; that we are not to expect it to take possession of the world by some great stroke of power, but to think of it as moving gradually towards its end according to laws of its own, which are beyond our cognizance and our control; that it is to win its triumphs, not by "startling Divine interpositions, but as grain matures and seeds grow under the fostering influence of Divine Providence" (Broadus); and, therefore, that instead of being anxious to see immediate results, or despondent when they do not appear, we should be patient and content to wait, hopeful of the future, and trustful of the Divine Will which provides and controls the secret energies of the receptive soil, no less than those of the seed. But the terms of this Parable, simple as they are, are so fertile and significant, that other lessons regarding the course of God's Kingdom, if not directly in view, lie at least so close to its scope as at once to present themselves. The idea of *secrecy*, for example, is not, indeed, the prominent thing here. Yet the Parable, in its general tenor, exhibits the Kingdom of God as a thing which increases silently, in ways not open to our inspection, by the operation of forces which work inwardly and in quiet. It suggests that, as in the case of all else that grows, the progress of the Kingdom of God, whether in

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society or in the experience of the individual, is a gradual thing, passing through the regular, successive stages of blade, ear, and full corn in the ear. It should teach us, further, that each of these stages is of God's ordering; that each is good in its own time, and has its own appropriate qualities; that the blade, scarce to be distinguished from the common grass, is not to be despised in comparison with the ear, nor the harsh ear to be contemned in comparison with the full, sweet corn; that we are not to stumble at the order of growth, or look for the mellow fruits of the ripened Christian life when it is the time of the beginnings, or of things short of maturity. The Parable does not touch the question of the relation of grace to the action of men or the growth of the kingdom. As it takes it for granted, without mention, that fruit-bearing is dependent on the sun and the rains of heaven, so it assumes the fact, elsewhere illustrated, of the dependence of all upon the grace of God. Like the *Leaven* and the *Mustard Seed*, it looks to the secret energies to which the result is due; but while in the latter of these two Parables it is the energies latent in the *seed* that are in view, here it is the energies latent in the *earth* itself. It is thus the proper complement to the Sower, and, as such, it is a Parable of encouragement and hope. For while the Sower speaks of obstacles and failures which attend the fortunes of the seed that is sown, this Parable speaks of the seed, when once deposited in the proper soil, as finding there forces to help its growth, and as certain to come to its maturity and fruitfulness, although by laws which may not act according to our expectations.

52. THE PARABLES OF THE SECOND PERIOD.—We come now to those Parables which we have called the *Intermediate* Parables, or Parables of the *Second Period*. We owe these, as we have seen, to the third Evangelist. Their great characteristic is that they address themselves by preference to the illustration of love, forgiveness, grace, and condescension. There are thirteen which may make this series, all given by Luke and by him only. And how much should we have lost but for this Gospel of the beloved physician, the companion of Paul! All the Evangelists, it is true, delight in reporting Christ's words and acts of grace. But it is most distinctive of Luke to select for his narrative those incidents and discourses which speak most eloquently of Jesus as the Friend of all sinners, even the most depraved, the Associate and Healer of all souls, even the most sick and wounded. It is Luke who tells us of the wonder of the people in the synagogue of Nazareth at "the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth" (iv. 22, R.V.); and it is Luke, above all others, who presents the Son of Man as the Physician whose joy it is to give access to Himself to the most diseased and sunken, that He may do the physician's work among them. So it is among the Parables peculiar to the third Gospel that we find those which best deserve to be described as "the very poetry and quintessence of the gospel of pardon and of Divine love" (Bruce). And the grace of their form matches the grace of their contents. They are of inimitable simplicity, tenderness, and beauty.

53. THE TWO DEBTORS (Luke vii. 40-48).—

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In none is the genius of the series now in view more conspicuous than in the first in the order of Luke's narrative. It is a Parable of *grace* in a supreme sense, its only rivals in this being the three in Luke xv. It was spoken to correct the hard judgment of one who mistook at once the grace of a penitent's act and the grace of the Saviour's condescension. As Jesus sat at meat in the house of a Pharisee called Simon, in a place unnamed, an interruption, which was as grateful to Him as it was an offence to His host, took place by the entrance of a woman who had led a profligate life in the city. Who she was is not further told us. The privacy which she herself would have sought veils even her name. For notwithstanding the recurrence of the name Simon (one of the commonest among the Jews), and the general likeness between the two scenes, we cannot take her to be one and the same person with the woman who gave a similar expression to her love on the occasion of the anointing which is recorded in the other Gospels, and who is named Mary by John (Matt. xxvi. 7; Mark xiv. 3; John xii. 3). The description of the leading figures in the two cases (in the one, a Pharisee; in the other, a leper: in the one, a sister of Lazarus, and a member of the holy family of Bethany; in the other, a "sinner"), and other differences forbid it. This stricken penitent, knowing that Jesus was in Simon's house, and acting on the irresistible impulse of intense love and gratitude to One who had befriended her and turned back the current of her miserable life, burst in upon the company, and in a passion of contrite, thankful,

reverent feeling, took her place behind Him as He reclined at table, wetting His feet with the hot streams of her tears, wiping them with the rich tresses of her hair, kissing them fervently, and pouring on them precious unguent from an alabaster cruse held in her trembling hand. If it was a surprise that an adherent of the scrupulous order of the Pharisees should have gone so far as to have Jesus at his table, it was no less a surprise, (notwithstanding the Eastern freedom which thought nothing of the uninvited coming into the room and seating themselves by the wall, and even mingling in the conversation of host and guests), that a woman of evil reputation should make her way into the dining-room of such a respectability of the town as Simon evidently was. His Pharisaic proprieties were altogether disconcerted by the woman's action, and not less by Christ's attitude to her. It seemed to him that his Guest did not recognise the kind of woman who stood so near Him unrepulsed; and, therefore, that he was no prophet, it being the Jewish belief that the discerning of spirits was one of the gifts of the true prophet.

54. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—It was in reply to these unuttered thoughts of His host that Jesus spoke this brief and gracious Parable about two men who were alike in debt, though in different sums, who were alike frankly forgiven, who also were alike expected to show gratitude. The debts are modest as compared with the vastness of the sums named in the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. In the one case it was only a matter of fifty pence or denarii, about thirty-

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five shillings—though much more than that if the relative purchasing power of money then and now is taken into account. The other was ten times as much. But both debts being ungrudgingly remitted, and it being taken for granted that gratitude is inspired by favours, the question was which of the two men should show most regard for the generous creditor. This question Jesus put pointedly to Simon, and drawing from him the confession that he who was forgiven most should love most, He made him pronounce judgment at once on his misapprehension of the woman's act, his doubt of Christ Himself, and the stinted honour he did his Guest. The point of the Parable is in the sentence, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loveth little"; the point of which is not that she was forgiven because she loved, but that she loved because she was forgiven. Her act was misjudged by Simon, because he neither took it in that this notorious woman was a forgiven penitent nor understood the logic of forgiveness. Christ declared her to be a *forgiven* sinner, and her act to be the result and evidence of her forgiveness. So He placed the liberty which the woman took, to the offence of the scrupulous Pharisee, in the light in which alone it could be rightly regarded; while He likewise justified Himself in not repelling her intrusion or refusing her homage, and laid bare the secret of Simon's failure. The Parable, therefore, indicates that all penitent sinners, even the most abandoned, are assured of the Divine forgiveness, and that it is Christ's glory to receive and welcome such. But

its most direct lesson is that the deeds of God's contrite ones, and the ways of Christ Himself, need a heart that knows the Divine grace to understand them. And the law of that grace, it teaches us, is this—that love is the issue of forgiveness, and the measure of love the evidence of the measure of forgiveness. The Pharisee knew nothing of the joy or might of penitence and pardon, and nothing, therefore, of the joy or might of love. He had been stinted, cold, and condescending in the reception given to Christ, neglectful of the finer courtesies of hospitality. The "sinner" had been lifted from the depths of degradation and shame to the joy and liberty of a new life, and her love was like the grace she had experienced. The chill decorum of the Pharisee had omitted the attentions of water for the feet (Gen. xviii. 4; Judges xix. 21), the kiss of peace (Gen. xlv. 15; Exod. xviii. 7), the anointing of the head with oil (Ps. xxiii. 5), attentions paid, if not to every guest, yet to those who were highly regarded. The inspiration of the large love born in the heart of the outcast so largely forgiven, offered tears for the forgotten water; kisses, ardent and multiplied, for the feet, instead of the salute of greeting on the cheek; the tresses of her hair for the towel of custom; a costly unguent lavished on His feet for the common oil which politeness furnished for the head.

55. THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke x. 28-37).—The second of the Parables peculiar to Luke, according to Luke's order, is described as a *typical* Parable rather than a *symbolic*. That is to say, it is one which instructs not by some figure or symbol taken

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from the world of nature or from custom, but by an *example* of the thing in view. Neither the time nor the place of its delivery is stated. But it belongs probably to the period of the Perean ministry, and it had its occasion in the attempt of a certain "lawyer" (that is to say, one whose office it was to expound and apply the Mosaic Law) to "tempt" Christ, or put Him to the test, by a question as to what *he*, this religious official so familiar with Divine things, should have to do in order to inherit eternal life. The man's object was less to receive instruction for himself than to measure the Master and draw from Him some reply which might lay Him open to correction. Christ, reading his intention, answered him as He did the rich young ruler (Matt. xix. 16-22) by a counter question—one which threw him back upon himself and his own knowledge of the Law. Pointing perhaps to the phylactery which he wore and the words to be found there, He asked what was written in the Law itself, and how he understood it. The lawyer replied by repeating two passages (Deut. vi. 5; Lev. xix. 18) which Christ Himself elsewhere gave, in response to the question of another lawyer, as His definition of the first and great commandment (Matt. xxii. 35-40; Mark xii. 28-34). Defeated in his purpose to entangle Christ in something conflicting with the Law, yet unwilling to confess himself beaten, and anxious to "justify himself" or set himself right before others, the lawyer ventured on a second question, as if all the difficulty of fulfilling the Levitical precept of love to one's neighbour lay in understanding who one's

neighbour was. Instead of offering a verbal definition of the term, Christ gave an example of what the Law meant, by putting the case of a man to whom neighbourly help was denied where it might have been looked for, and obtained where it might have been less expected. The man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, which lay in the Jordan Valley some 600 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. For a large part of its course the road led through a dangerous pass infested by "robbers" (as it should be) or brigands. A band of these desperadoes, sallying forth from the shelters of the defile, fell upon the traveller, stripped him of all he had, even to his clothes, and left him naked and mercilessly wounded. As he lay half dead in this dreary ravine,—the scene of deeds of violence which earned for it the name of *Adummim* (Joshua xv. 7; xviii. 17), *the Pass of Blood*,—a priest, a servant of the Law which enjoined mercy even to a beast (Exod. xxiii. 4, 5), happened to come that way. He saw the traveller's misery, but in face of it all "passed by on the other side," as if it were no affair of his. He was followed by a Levite, another, though inferior, servant of the Temple. He also caught sight of the helpless man, and looked upon his misery. But he, too, like the priest, passed on without further concern. But in the happy coincidences of the day a third wayfarer appeared, a Samaritan, one of the mongrel race hated of the Jews. And what neither priest nor Levite had done, this stranger did, and did it royally, to the wounded man, because he was a man and one in direst need. When he saw him he felt for him,

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stopped his journey, went up to him, attended to his wounds, gave up his own ass to him, and brought him to an inn—in this case something better than the common *caravanserai* which provided only bare shelter. Nor did his charity cease there. He looked after him in the hostelry, and, on departing next morning, left a sum sufficient for immediate needs (two denarii, the wage of a labourer for a couple of days), with a promise to pay what else should be required.

56. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—It has been said of this Parable that it has been "the consolation of the wanderer and the sufferer, of the outcast and the heretic, in every age and country" (Stanley). Its lesson is obvious, and it is given in a way to cast the questioner back on his own conscience. Having finished the tale of the three men, Jesus asked the lawyer which of them "was neighbour," or *proved* himself neighbour, to the sufferer; and, getting from him an answer which covered the principle of neighbourly relation, He bade him go and act a like part, instead of staying on captious questions. The story was so told by our Lord as to give a practical rather than a formal reply to the query, explaining how the lawyer was to show himself neighbour to another rather than who was neighbour to him, and leaving the rest as matter of evident inference. It meant that love solved all such questions, and that if we had the spirit which the Law enjoins towards others, we should know nothing of the "nicely-calculated less or more" in deciding who our neighbour is. So the Parable teaches that our charity is due to our fellowmen as such, without distinction

of race or religion; that he is our neighbour whosoever has need of us; that "it is not place but love that makes neighbourhood" (Wordsworth). With justice, therefore, is it described "as a conscience in the heart of Christendom condemning inhumanity, breeding shame of cowardice and selfishness, and prompting to deeds of kindness by a heavenly yet sober and practicable ideal of benevolence" (Bruce).

57. THE FRIEND AT MIDNIGHT (Luke xi. 5-8).—This Parable, otherwise called that of the *Importunate Friend*, or that of the *Selfish Neighbour*, follows a request for instruction in prayer. Our Lord had been praying in a place unnamed, and one of His disciples, who had heard those holy pleadings so unlike the formal Jewish way, was prompted to ask Him to teach them to pray. In response, Jesus set before them a guide and a model in the Prayer of Prayers, the Lord's Prayer, which Matthew records as part of the Sermon on the Mount. Luke, bringing together things with a common subject, introduces in this connection a further statement made by our Lord on the subject of prayer, especially regarding its spirit and its answer. The Parable begins with a question which puts a case, and asks the hearers how they would have acted in the circumstances. It is the case of a man who has an unexpected demand made upon his hospitality by the arrival of a traveller at midnight, when there is nothing in the house to set before him. The host, to whom as to every true Jew the law of hospitality is sacred, sees nothing for it but to go, late as it is,

to the house of a friend, and ask him to lend him three loaves—a quantity enough to help him creditably over the difficulty. He finds the man in bed, and is met by a rude reply not to pester him, backed up by excuses taken from the inconvenience of getting up, unbarring the door (a more troublesome thing than with us), and disturbing the children. But the petitioner hears as if he heard not, and continues pressing his request until the churlish neighbour is conquered by his pertinacity (literally, his *shamelessness*), a pertinacity which sinks all feeling and all restraint in the sense of the urgency of the circumstances; and in order to be done with it, rises and gives him not merely something, but as much as he wants.

58. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—It is a homely scene in an unpretentious house, where parents and children are at rest in the same room and the same bed, the bed here being probably the "*divan* or raised platform, which often filled nearly half a room in a Jewish or Eastern house" (Plumptre). The disturbance of their slumbers, which is pictured by our Lord, was a thing common enough in lands where it was customary to travel late for the sake of coolness, and where inns were so few that the wayfarer had often to trust himself to private hospitality. Christ puts the case in order to draw from it an inference, and He gives it with authority—"I say unto you." The framework of the Parable may suggest that intercessory prayer is immediately in view. Its instruction, however, applies to all prayer. It deals implicitly with the question of delays and seeming denials in the answer to prayer; and

especially, as we may gather from the sequel and the mention of the gift of the Holy Spirit there (xi. 9-13), with the needs of the individual life and the apparent lack of progress in the business of the Kingdom of God there. It suggests that delays or denials in the matter of prayer have their reason not in God's reluctance, but in our unpreparedness or in the deep things of His counsel for our good and His Kingdom's cause. It teaches, *first*, that the spirit of successful prayer is the spirit of persevering prayer; and *second*, that true prayer has its answer assured, however it may seem deferred. It is an instance of reasoning from the less to the greater. If urgent, continuous prayer prevails with a selfish, indolent, churlish man, how much more must it prevail with the Most High God, who cares for us with a Father's love?

59. THE RICH FOOL (Luke xii. 16-21).—This Parable is preceded by a statement on what occasioned it. A certain man, impressed by what he had heard and seen in Jesus, appealed to Him in a disputed question of property. People went to the scribes, the custodiers of the law, with such matters. This man addressing Jesus as a Rabbi, thought to interest Him and turn His authority to account in a grievance he had against his brother, in the matter of an inheritance. Jesus rejected the appeal as pointing to something outside His proper work, and warned the petitioner against the covetous spirit which makes and maintains such disputes. In illustration of the folly of covetousness in this or any form, He told this story of a rich man's embarrassment and mistake; the counsel which he

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took with himself over the difficulty of dealing with crops so plentiful as to exhaust the capacity of all his store-houses; his resolve to pull down these inadequate barns and build others large enough to take in the most liberal crops of the most liberal season, and to store all his goods; his expectation (expressed in the form of an invitation to his *soul*, the seat of appetite and feeling) to give himself wholly to ease and enjoyment when the strain of all this building and storing is over; and then the sentence of God, the sudden requiring of that same "soul" to which so much was vainly promised, the death coming swiftly as the chastisement of his folly, the scattering of all his treasured goods.

60. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—This man committed himself to three great mistakes. He mistook his *life*, imagining that it consisted in the abundance of his possessions, whereas neither the happiness of life nor even the mere continuance of existence could be guaranteed by that. He mistook his *worldly means*, hoarding where it would have been wise to bestow, not discerning that the barns for his superfluity were "the bosoms of the needy, the houses of the widows, the mouths of orphans and children" (Ambrose). He mistook his *future*, presuming on length of days when that same night was to be his last. The Speaker of the Parable Himself gives its lesson when he adds these solemn words, "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." It is the peril of the spirit of greed, the retribution of the selfish use of one's means. The man who reserves for himself what he possesses is entangled in the folly of him whose

story is so vividly, so terribly told in this brief Parable. The loss of his soul, the dissipation of his gathered wealth—this is his end. But the man who makes a merciful and beneficent use of what he possesses is rich toward God, and has a treasure in heaven secure against change and death.

61. THE BARREN FIG-TREE (Luke xiii. 6-9). —Certain persons had brought our Lord the report of a ruthless punishment, unrecorded elsewhere, inflicted by Pilate on some Galileans. Jesus takes the opportunity of warning His informants not to misjudge these Galileans as the Jew was too apt to do, but to consider that they are themselves involved in the common sin of the nation, and certain to be involved in the nation's doom, unless they repent. He Himself refers to another instance, also reported only here, of exceptional calamity, and repeats the warning. Then He speaks this Parable which enlarges the scope of what He has said on repentance, and adds to its solemn definiteness. The case imagined is that of a fig-tree planted in a vineyard. The law of Deuteronomy (xxii. 9), which forbade the sowing of a vineyard with divers seeds, did not apply to a case like this ; and the expressions indicate the peculiar care bestowed upon the tree. It was *planted*, not a chance-growth ; and it was planted in a place to which it had no title, in a *vineyard*,—in the corners of which, as travellers tell us, a fig-tree is not uncommonly found, where also the soil is favourable to it. Having thus placed it the owner was entitled to look for fruit of it, but his just expectations were disappointed. Three successive years he had come in vain—a period sufficient

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to prove it hopelessly barren. Now He judges it not only useless, but an encumbrance, occupying ground which might be turned to more profitable account. He will cut it down, and give its place to another plant. But his purpose is stayed by the intercession of the gardener, who would yet again do all that can be done for it, in the hope that next year it may come to better things, but also with the acknowledgment that, if it fails then, it can be endured no longer.

62. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—It is a Parable of judgment upon Israel, but of judgment only in the last issue, and not untempered with mercy. The Jewish nation, elsewhere (*e.g.*, Psalm lxxx.) compared to a vine, is here the Fig-tree in a vineyard; the variation in the comparison indicating perhaps that Israel has no prescriptive right to the position of privilege. The three years point to the space of time during which God, who has so singularly cared for Israel, has looked for what He has never found in Israel, from the time when first He gave it its position in the vineyard of His Kingdom on to those days of Christ. And now, the barrenness of the nation being proved, its God might justly transfer its place to the Gentiles. But Christ wins for it yet a further space for repentance. His ministry is still its opportunity. But, if that also is rejected, the Divine long-suffering is exhausted, grace can do no more, the doom will come on persistent impenitence, the nation will perish and its privilege be given to another.

63. THE GREAT SUPPER (Luke xiv. 15-24).—This Parable was spoken in the course of hos-

pitalities in the house of a Pharisee of position, which drew from Jesus words of strong admonition. When He paused one of the company broke in with the exclamation, "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." The man betrayed to Jesus his superficial idea of the Kingdom, his Pharisaic thought of it as a privilege secure to such as he, his Pharisaic ignorance of the moral conditions of inheriting it. He turned to him, therefore, and laid bare the folly of the Pharisaic attitude to the Kingdom of God, by this pungent story of a host who makes a great banquet and is disappointed in the guests he has first in view. The supper is termed a "great" supper, because of the numbers intended to partake of it, and many are actually called. As appears to have been the way, at least with men of rank, two calls are sent—a preliminary one conveying the invitation, and a later intimating that all is now ready. The first call seemingly is received with satisfaction. The second, which means that they shall give up what they are engaged with and act upon the host's grace, is declined with sundry apologies. Their excuses are taken from things lawful in themselves and in their own place. They differ in terms, as the things differ which engross the men for the time, in field, or mart, or house; and the last of the three is blunter and ruder than the others. But the men are wholly at one in begging off, and their excuses all express the same satisfied immersion in worldly interests, the same preference of these to the host's grace. The host is naturally wroth when the report of this is brought him. Resolved to be done with these

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ingrates for ever, he sends his servant at once into the streets and lanes of the city, and brings to his table "the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind"—guests whose only difficulty with the call is their sense that it is too good for them. All being gathered, he is informed that "yet there is room." But in his just indignation he will not reserve even those last vacant places for the men who have dealt so discourteously with his invitations. He sends a second time and further afield, out of the city altogether, away into the highways and hedges of the country parts. His table is filled with those whom his servant has found in these remoter places, and has *compelled* to come in by overcoming their strangeness and diffidence. And the men of his own city who were the first called are left finally without.

64. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—This Parable is of the same order as the former, being a Parable of judgment on the chosen nation. It is even of more awful moment than it. For the Parable of the Fig-tree speaks of judgment in the form of the destruction of Israel's national existence, and it speaks of that doom as capable of being averted even then by repentance. But the Parable of the Great Supper speaks of judgment in the form of exclusion from the blessings of the Messianic grace, and says nothing of the possibility of a place being yet open to Israel. The Supper is a figure of the rich grace which was to come to men by Christ. The Jews are those whom God designed to be its first participants. The first call is the earnest which the Jews had under the Old Testament, in contrast

with the Gentiles outside the theocracy, of the coming grace; and this they used only as a thing of privilege, a note of superiority. The second call is the token of the realisation of that grace and of Christ's actual institution of the Kingdom which is not of this world; and this they put away from them because of its demands of repentance, faith, unworldliness, and consecration. The place in the promised Kingdom of God, therefore, which they refuse, passes away from them. It goes to those who are of the same city with them, and yet not of it, to the homeless men of the streets and lanes, to the classes despised by the Pharisees, to the publicans and sinners, instead of the nation as such, and its leaders and official classes. And it goes to others even than these—to those who are in no sense of the city, to the men of the outside highways and hedges, to the outcasts of the Gentiles. But for the men of the city, the nation chosen of God, the people for whom this grace is first prepared and who refuse it in impenitence and in the pride of privilege, there is exclusion.

65. THE LOST SHEEP (Luke xv. 3-7).—At a certain point in our Lord's ministry there was a general movement on the part of the less reputable classes towards Him. The graciousness with which He not only admitted such people to His presence, but even ate with them, was an offence to the Pharisees and Scribes. The murmurings of these hard Jews at an attitude so unlike their own to publicans and sinners, formed the occasion of three Parables, inimitable in their sweet simplicity, which are given together in one matchless chapter of

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Luke's Gospel, and were probably spoken at one time. All three are addressed to those censorious representatives of official Jewish religionism. In the first, Jesus invites them to put themselves in the position of the owner of a goodly flock of sheep who is in danger of loss. He pictures the man missing one sheep, only one out of a hundred, and for its sole sake leaving the ninety and nine untended for a time in the wilderness, and following the lost one without pause till he finds it; and not only so, but laying it fondly on his shoulder when it is recovered, and carrying it carefully home, grudging neither toil nor trouble on its account, rejoicing over it indeed with a gladness in which he must have his friends and neighbours sympathise and share with him.

66. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—Matthew also has a Parable of a *Lost* or *Stray Sheep* which runs in very similar terms (ch. xviii. 12-14). It is given, however, in a different connection, and with a different purpose. The point of Matthew's Parable is God's care over the least. That of Luke's is Christ's grace to the lost. This one is spoken as Christ's defence of Himself and His condemnation of the Pharisees. It shows how the recovery of lost ones is His most proper work. Is there one among them, He asks these murmurers, who would not act as the owner of those sheep acts? Is not such longing to regain the erring prompted at once by the shepherd's feeling for the sheep and by interest in what is one's own? If such pains are thought becoming in the case of a strayed sheep, how much more in that of a lost soul? For a sinner wander-

ing in his sin is loss to Christ; and greater loss to Him by far than a missing sheep is to its owner. It means, too, that in thus doing a Saviour's work He should have their sympathy instead of their murmurs; and this is made sharper still by the words which are spoken directly of the estimates of a higher Court than that of earth. Speaking for the moment from their own point of view, and assuming them to be what they took themselves to be—righteous men needing no repentance, He tells these Pharisees that the very thing of which they think so poorly is the subject of joy in heaven, and of greater joy in the case of a single penitent sinner than ninety and nine such men as they are can inspire. The sympathy of heaven with the love that seeks and recovers the lost is the last rebuke of their murmurings, the highest vindication of His grace to the outcast.

67. THE LOST COIN (Luke xv. 8-10).—The same truths are illustrated by the figure of a woman who loses a piece of money. What pains will she take to recover it, lighting a lamp to see into the darkest corners, sweeping the house, leaving no nook unexplored! And when her search is crowned with success, will she not rejoice and expect her neighbours to enter into her gladness? How much more should the Saviour have the sympathy of men in His longing by all means to save lost souls, and in His joy over the recovery of even one such soul—a joy shared by the angels, though denied by these Pharisees. A life-like picture! An appeal not to be gainsaid!

68. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—Some dis-

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cover meanings in this simple vivid Parable which are beyond its real purpose, taking the *house*, for example, as a figure of the Church, and the *woman* as a figure of the Holy Spirit. Some, too, think that there must be some clear distinction between this Parable and the preceding, and find it in the idea of the image of God in erring man as suggested by the imprint of the sovereign's head on the coin, or in something equally far-fetched. If there is a difference, it is rather in the comparative values of the objects lost, in one case a sheep and one of a hundred, in the other case a single coin and one out of ten. The slender value of the missing coin, a *drachma* (equal only to some 8d. of our money), and the insignificance of the woman's whole possession, only ten such *drachmae*, may be an index of the worth even of small souls in Christ's eye, and the seemliness of joy over the recovery even of one such. But the difference is more in the form of the Parable than in its purpose. Repeating the appeal to the joy of angels, but omitting the comparison between the one penitent and the ninety and nine good persons, it illustrates the same great verities of Divine love and grace as the former Parable.

69. THE PRODIGAL SON (Luke xv. 11-32).—The third of the series is akin to the former two in subject, but has distinct features of its own. Those take the form of a question. This one has the form of a narrative. And the narrative has a wealth of circumstance and a tenderness of feeling which make this the Chief of Parables. According to the Hebrew law (Deut. xxi. 17), the elder son had a double portion of the inheritance, and here the

younger son asks (demanding rather than requesting) immediate possession of the third which makes his legal share. The father consents, and the son soon lets it be seen what he has had in view. "After a few days" he turns his back upon his home, weary of its pure restraints, and goes off with all his property into a "far country," where he shall be free to follow his own ideas of life. He has his brief time of mad indulgence, and then the day of disillusion comes. He is soon at the end of his means, and just then a famine sweeps over the country of his wilful choice: the land has nothing to offer him, its people help him not, and he sinks into such abject misery that he sells his liberty to keep himself from starvation. But he stoops thus low only to have his misery increased. He is sent to a service most hateful and most degrading to a Jew—the feeding of swine; and so biting is his want that he is fain to cram himself with the wretched provender given to these unclean beasts—the "husks," the coarse, unsatisfying fruit of the carob tree, or St John's bread, also known as the locust-tree, common in Palestine north of Hebron, and shedding immense quantities of hard, horn-shaped pods, the food of beasts, and at times of the abject poor. So he stands in all this misery, a famished slave, unaided, unpitied—"no one gave to him." Then the thought of his forsaken home, and the superfluity which even a hired servant enjoys there, rises on him in his extremity, and provokes the resolve to return and humble himself, and confess his sin against God and his father, and crave to be taken back, though only to the place of one of these

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servants. But when he is yet far from his home, and his courage perhaps fails him to approach, he is anticipated by his father, who has been looking for him in his yearning, and now welcomes him with a passionate love which makes the intended confession stop short of the crave for a servant's place. The stole or upper dress, the best in the house, and the other things of honour (*cf.* Gen. xlv. 22; Esther, iii. 10, 11; viii. 2, 8; Song of Songs vii. 1), the signet-ring and the shoes which the attendants are bidden bring forth and put upon him, are the signs of his restoration to the standing of a son; and the banquet which is ordered (and "on every farm," says an expositor, "was the calf that was being fattened for the feast-day; Jesus knew rural manners") is the token of the father's joy over the recovery of one who had been lost to him. But the figure of the elder brother now appears. As he returns from his toil in the field he hears the music and dancing, and learning their occasion, he is possessed by jealousy and rage. He refuses to go in, though his father leaves the feast to bid him come and share in the general joy. He speaks bitter words about the unequal treatment meted out to himself and to the profligate, the brother whom he repudiates. But the father meets his upbraidings with the loving consideration with which he had met the errors and repentings of his younger son, and reminds him of the place he has always had in the home and in his own fellowship, and of the fitness of the joy which he grudged over the recovery of one who had sinned and suffered.

70. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—This "Crown

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and Pearl" of all the Parables repeats the lesson of the former two. But it does it in a yet larger way, with a pathos, a human interest, a divine suggestiveness all its own. Those Pharisaic murmurers are made to see themselves in this *elder brother* in all the unloveliness of their hard, unfilial spirit. If the former Parables show them how they ought to have acted, this one shows them, it is rightly observed, how they had acted. Hereby Jesus again justifies His ways of grace with the disreputable and sinful. But here we have the story of a lost *son* instead of that of a lost *sheep* or a lost *coin*, and this makes the moral interest and the moral appeal of the Parable more immediate and more personal than in the others. Here, too, we have the figure of a *father* welcoming back an erring child to the child's position, and so this Parable speaks to us as no other does of the attitude of God, the heavenly Father, to the sinful, and of the joy with which He receives the returning penitent. Having a living man, too, for its subject, it tells, as the former two cannot tell, the secret of the sinner's inward experience—his lust for independence, his self-will and folly, his misery, his penitence and self-humiliation and self-confession, the return of the filial feeling. And in all this it is the largest and most uplifting revelation of the Fatherhood of God in all its love and grace.

71. THE UNJUST STEWARD (Luke xvi. 1-9).—This Parable is connected in subject or in occasion with the former three. If it was spoken at the same time as these, then it will appear that the *disciples* to whom it was addressed included many publicans and sinners (xv. 1). As the former three, too, were

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spoken directly to the Pharisees and Scribes, the disciples being listeners, this one was spoken directly to the disciples, the Pharisees and Scribes being listeners. The story is that of a rich man and his steward—the latter being an official entrusted with the management of a great estate, and possessing full authority over it. He is charged with squandering the property, perhaps by his personal extravagance. His master, believing the charge to be true, calls him to account and intimates his dismissal. Unable either to work or to beg, the man has to think of some way of meeting the gloomy future. At last he hits upon a plan. He will make friends of the men he has been dealing with, and who are debtors to the estate—whether contractors, or middlemen, or traders, or tenants who have received large quantities of material products on promises of payment not yet discharged. He calls them before him, and bids each tell the amount he owes. Having thus made them feel their position as debtors, he instructs them to enter their obligations at greatly reduced figures. He makes these changes in the bills not in the way of forgery, but in the exercise of his ample administrative authority. He gives different proportions of reduction, half the number of *baths* (1 Kings vii. 26, 38) of oil (the bath amounting to about nine gallons, if taken to be equal to the *firkin* of John ii. 6), one-fifth the number of *cors* (the *cor* being about eight bushels) of wheat. He makes these differences perhaps to give himself "the air of acting simply by favour and personal preference, seeking in this way to strengthen the feeling of obligation to his person" (Goebel).

He will have it done quickly, because the time of his stewardship, when alone this is possible, is so short. So he further wastes his master's goods in the hope of making friends who will stand by him in his adversity. He does it all in a way to benefit these debtors without making any immediate gain for himself. He does it openly, too, so that his master knows it. And his master commends, not the dishonesty, indeed, of his action, but its shrewdness, its clear-sighted, quick-witted adaptation to the making of a good future.

72. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—The interpretation of this Parable has been greatly disputed, and much difficulty has been felt with the selection of a dishonest man, in any sense, as an example to Christian people. But the general purpose of the Parable is clear. It is a lesson on the use of our worldly means—a lesson the more seasonable if publicans and sinners were among the "disciples" who heard it. It meant that they should prove the sincerity of their sense of the Divine grace by an unselfish employment of what they possessed. The Steward is classed by our Lord (verse 8) with "the children of this world," those whose interests and thoughts are limited to earth; and the *wisdom* which is commended is described as holding good only "in their generation," only with regard to worldly men and the things of time. But from this our Lord argues the wisdom that should all the more characterise "the children of light," those of His own Kingdom, whose thoughts and interests rise above earth and time. Using the Chaldean word *mammon* for wealth, He bids them so use their

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means as to make themselves friends by it in the other world when the time comes that "it fails," as the R.V. gives it, instead of "ye fail" in verse 9. Who precisely are to be understood by the "friends" who are thus to be won, whether the term is a figure of God Himself, who alone can *admit* to heaven, or points to men benefited on earth, and pictured as welcoming their benefactors to heaven, is not certain. But the lesson is unmistakable. It is that our means are to be used with a view to the eternal future, not selfishly but to the good of others; and that this unselfish, charitable discharge of the great trust of our means in time will have its reward with God, and follow us for good into the heaven which is here significantly described as "eternal tents."

73. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke xvi. 19-31).—Of this Parable it is said that it "is not like a type, which a man cannot read until it is turned, but like a manuscript, which delivers its sense directly and at first hand" (Arnot). Its imaginary narrative is so graphic that it reads like bits of actual life. In strong realistic terms it gives the story of two men, represented as near neighbours, yet absolutely apart in lot and life. The one is left unnamed, the other gets the significant name of Lazarus, the Old Testament Eleazar, meaning *God is my Help*. The burden of the Parable is the contrast between the two men—a contrast which, showing itself in their career in time, follows them through death into the hereafter. And what is said of Lazarus is intended to throw into stronger relief all that is said of his rich despiser. On the platform of the earthly life we see a man of unstinted wealth

which he spends in self-indulgence, show, and luxury. His ordinary attire is the richest that can be procured. His outer garment or cloak is of the kind of which royal gifts are made (Esther viii. 15) —wool dyed in the costly Tyrian purple. His inner garment or tunic is of the fine linen of Egypt, scarce less costly, the white raiment of the priests (Exod. xxviii. 39). His ordinary fare is a sumptuous feast; he lives in gay carousal "every day." And lying at his gate, obtruding his misery on his notice, but all unhelped and unregarded, is a beggar, the victim of a fell disease, so poverty-stricken that he would be glad to get what falls from the careless table within; so abject, forsaken, and helpless that (last stroke added to his wretchedness !) the dogs of the streets, to the Jew most hateful, make free to lick his sores with their unclean lips. So the two live, and in time the end comes to each. The beggar dies first, and then the rich man, of whom it is added that "he was buried"—his pomp and luxury lost to him thus for ever. But beyond this each has also his lot, in the other world. The beggar and outcast of this world in that world is in "Abraham's bosom"—a Jewish expression for the fellowship and felicity of Paradise. Fortune's careless favourite here is "in torments" there in Hades; so wretched that he becomes a petitioner for the help of Lazarus, for so small a boon as a drop of water from the tip of a wetted finger. So complete is the reversal of lots in the other world, so perfect the adjustment of destiny there to the moral conditions of the two lives here.

74. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—The purpose

of the Parable is suggested by its occasion. The Pharisees had heard the solemn words on the service of Mammon. Being "lovers of money" they "scoffed" at the speaker as if they were above such warnings (xvi. 14, R.V.). Jesus exposed them as men who sought to *make* themselves just in the eyes of men, while in their secret heart they were unjust and dishonourers of the Law of which outwardly they made so much. And in connection with this He spoke this Parable with respect to the selfish, covetous spirit seen in them. It is not its immediate object, therefore, to teach a large doctrine of the intermediate state or of the future life. It proceeds indeed on the broad truths that there is a future life; that in that life there will be a just reward for good and a just retribution for evil; and that these awards cannot be undone or changed. But it goes no farther than this. The rich man's petition in favour of his poor brethren is not an evidence of a change of character taking place in the other world. It is an expression of natural family feeling, which has behind it the complaint that if more had been done for the man himself in his earthly life by the God of Grace, he might not have come into this condition. So the Parable speaks of the Jew as having in Moses and the Prophets light enough to show him the way of duty and of life. It teaches thus the sufficiency of the present means of grace, and the truth that, if these fail with a man, no portent, not even the visit of one from the dead, will succeed with him. But its great and immediate lesson is akin to that of the former Parable. It is the condemnation of the covetous spirit and the

careless, indulgent life. It is the broad moral lesson of the just retribution that waits the twin sins of selfishness and unmercifulness.

75. THE UNJUST JUDGE (Luke xviii. 1-8).—The opening verse declares the purpose of this Parable. The Law decreed the appointment of judges in the cities through all the tribes, and strictly forbade the wresting of judgment, respect of persons, or taking bribes (Deut. xvi. 18-20). One of those urban judges, but one shamelessly corrupt, as Eastern judges too often have been, is here supposed to be appealed to by a widow, who being of the same city naturally goes to him for justice. The Jewish Law, mercifully recognising the helplessness of widows, made special and repeated mention of their case (Exod. xxii. 22-24 ; Deut. x. 18 ; xxiv. 17). This one comes again and again with her cry to have justice done her against one who oppresses her. But "for a while" (R.V.) this unscrupulous judge, who cares nothing for God or for man, heeds her not. Yet at last her importunity succeeds where everything else fails. She comes so persistently that the man fears she will "wear him out" (R.V.), or even come to blows with him (as the word rendered "weary me" literally means), and to be done with her he attends to her rights.

76. PURPOSE OF THE PARABLE. — This Parable resembles that of the Importunate Friend (Luke xi. 5-8), in teaching the duty and the reward of perseverance in prayer. It is again an instance of reasoning from the less to the greater. If a pleading that will not accept denial prevails even with an unscrupulous judge, how much more must

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earnest continuous prayer be sure of its answer with a God of perfect righteousness? But the present Parable differs from the former in inculcating this patient, constant prayerfulness with special reference to Christ's Coming and the trials of His disciples in the interval. Because the day of recompense seems to tarry long and there is much to suffer, men may be tempted to become weary of prayer. But God cannot forget His elect; and persevering prayer will be answered by their reward at Christ's Return.

77. THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN (Luke xviii. 9-14).—Prayer is again dealt with in this Parable, but as illustrating a certain spirit. There were fixed hours for prayer in the Temple, and the forecourt was the place. So it is that two men are represented as going up to the Temple at the same time and for the same purpose. They are men of very different kinds, however, and their prayers are different. The one, an adherent of the strict religious class, takes up a position apart, and speaks loftily to God of his freedom from sins (especially those against property and purity) to which others are prone, of his unlikeness to the man who came up with him, of his superior attention to all legal requirements. If the Law prescribes fasting once a year (Lev. xvi 29), he fasts twice a week; if it asks a tenth of the increase of fields and herds as holy unto the Lord (Lev. xxvii. 30-32), he gives tithes of all his property. The other, a member of the disreputable body of tax-gatherers, odious for their extortions, humbly keeps behind, with downcast look smites his breast in painful sorrow

for his sin, and can only cry to God to be propitious (as it means) or merciful to him "the sinner." Yet Jesus declares this despised, grief-pierced penitent to have gone down "justified rather than the other," to be of a better standing with God, to be recognised as righteous rather than he. The Parable is addressed to certain persons (probably hearers who had the Pharisaic spirit, though not themselves Pharisees) who were guilty of the two great vices of holding themselves to be righteous, and scorning others as unrighteous. It teaches that the way to acceptance with God is by the opposite spirit, the contrite spirit which thinks of its own sin, not of the sins of others, and looks humbly to God's grace. It is the foundation of Paul's doctrine of justification not by works of law, but by faith which excludes boasting.

78. PARABLES OF THE THIRD PERIOD—THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT (Matt. xviii. 21-35).—Before He left Galilee for the last time Jesus spoke to the disciples on the duty of forgiveness. His words prompted Peter, who knew something perhaps of the distinctions made by the Rabbis in the precepts of the Law which bore on such matters, to put a question regarding the extent to which this grace of forgiveness was to be carried in the case of repeated offences. Jesus answered that it was practically a duty without limitation, its measure being not his seven times, but seventy times seven. At the same time He took occasion to make it clearer that such is the law of His Kingdom by this narrative of a great King who, judging it time to receive from his "servants" (officials evidently of

high rank and extensive powers) a full account of their administration of his property, finds one who had to confess to an enormous debt of ten thousand talents (from £2,000,000 to £2,400,000)—Haman's estimate of the gain to come by the destruction of the Jews (Esther iii. 9). Under the laws of ancient nations, the Jews among others, the creditor might sell the debtor himself, his property, and even his family (*cf.* 2 Kings iv. 1) in order to recover his own. The King is to let the law take its course, but is overcome by the entreaties of the debtor. The man pleads for patience, for time, and he will pay all. The King grants him more than he asks—not a respite only, but complete remission. But when the man so generously dealt with is out of the King's presence, he falls upon a fellow-servant who owes him a paltry sum of a hundred denarii (something like seventy shillings), takes him by the throat, demands instant payment, spurns his petition for a respite, and having no power to sell a fellow-servant, casts him mercilessly into prison. The unfeeling man is reported by his aggrieved fellow-servants to the King, who in his just wrath recalls his pardon, and delivers him to "the tormentors," "the roughest class of prison-attendants" (Goebel), to be detained in miserable, hopeless confinement till he can accomplish the impossible by discharging his vast debt to its last farthing. So Jesus exhibits the evil of an implacable, unforgiving spirit, and teaches that this sin means the loss of grace and the certainty of the just and irreversible judgment of God.

79. THE LABOURERS IN THE VINEYARD (Matt. xx. 1-16).—This Parable appears to have

been spoken when Jesus had left Galilee and was on His journey through Peraea. It seems to have been intended also to illustrate the enigmatical saying, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first," which made part of Christ's reply to Peter's question as to what they, the Apostles, who had forsaken all for Him, were to have in His Kingdom (Matt. xix. 27-30). It closes indeed with a similar sentence, "So the last shall be first, and the first last." (R.V.) It gives the story of a householder who goes out at early morning, the beginning of the Jews' day, and hires certain labourers to do work in his vineyard, agreeing to pay them the usual day's wage, a *denarius*. But three hours after this, and again at the sixth hour and the ninth, he hires others in the same way, agreeing to pay them not a specified sum, but a fair wage. So late even as the eleventh hour he goes out once more, and, finding some still unemployed, not for want of will to work, but for lack of opportunity, he sends them also into the vineyard. At the end of the day he proceeds to pay them. But he begins with those last hired, and who consequently have done least work, and through his overseer he gives these men, in the presence of all the rest, a full day's wage. Those first hired, when their turn comes, expect a larger wage, and when they get only the *denarius* they murmur, thinking it now an unequal remuneration for their longer and heavier service. The master meets their murmurs by reminding one of them that he, the hirer, has acted justly, having given all that he engaged to give; that he is at liberty to do what he wills with his own; and

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that misjudgment of his kindness implied the evil disposition of jealousy in the other.

80. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—The Parable is one of difficult and disputed interpretation. It deals with the call of God to work in His Kingdom; for the "vineyard" is elsewhere a figure of that Kingdom (Is. v. 1, 7; Jer. xii. 10). It deals especially with the reward of service in it. It does not mean, however, that Heaven will be the same to all, that all who work in the Kingdom of God will have the self-same reward, or that there will be no equitable recognition hereafter of varieties in the measure of service done here. Nor is the point of the Parable in the mention of the *hours*, as if it referred to the different times, youth, manhood, old age, at which men receive God's call. Its meaning is rather this—that there will be different degrees of just reward for different degrees of service; but that these will not be according to the appearances of things. The adjustment of reward to service will not be according to the visible measures of length and magnitude, but according to the invisible measures of opportunity, spirit, motive. So some that are first in service as it is seen by men, may be last in the heavenly reward, and some that are last in the one, may be first in the other.

81. THE TWO SONS (Matt. xxi. 28-32).—This Parable is the condemnation of the chief priests and elders. These attacked Christ by questioning His authority. He silences them by a counter question regarding John's baptism (xxi. 23-27). He then proceeds with this simple, but suggestive story of a man and his two sons. The father bids first the

one and then the other go and do some work in his vineyard. The first replies with a blunt refusal, but by and bye regrets it, and goes. The other responds with what seems a hearty *yes*, but for all that fails to go. Having put the case, Jesus asks which of the two sons did the father's will, and obtains the proper answer. The Parable is meant to expose the insincerity of these official religionists, and the remoteness of their ways from the will of God, in comparison even with those of notorious sinners—publicans, harlots, and the like. There were those, like these latter, who at first refused God's call, but afterwards yielded to John's preaching, and changed their lives. But these proud Jewish leaders, with a great show of zeal for God's Law, gave it only a hollow and ineffectual homage. John came to them "in the way of righteousness," their own way of legal obedience. Yet at heart they went not with him, nor did they change their mind and in sincerity accept his testimony even when they saw others, who had been strangers to the Law, believing him.

82. THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN (Matt. xxi. 33-41; Mark xii. 1-9; Luke xx. 9-16).—Like the preceding one, this Parable seems to belong to the second day after our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is given by each of the Synoptists, and from Luke (xx. 9) we gather that it was addressed to the people as well as to the chief priests and elders. In terms which recall Isaiah's fifth chapter, it speaks of a householder, and the vineyard which he had planted. Having provided it with a fence for its protection against beasts, a wine-press, and a tower or lookout for its security against

robbers, he made it over to the control of certain husbandmen during his absence on a considerable journey. Returning at the end of the season he sent first one body of servants, and then a second, more numerous or of higher rank in his service, to get the fruits which were due. But all that they received was cruel handling, beating, stoning, death. Last of all, unwilling to give up hope of these outrageous men, he even sent his son, his only son, the son of his love. But with no avail. Thinking that if the heir were got rid of, there would be less difficulty in keeping hold of the vineyard, they seized the son, cast him out of his own inheritance, and killed him. Having told the story thus far, Jesus turned upon His hearers, those priests and leaders especially, and asking them what the natural sequel would be, He drew from them their own condemnation in the admission that forbearance so long continued, and grace so wonderfully shown, could only be followed at last by the destruction of these wicked men, and the transferring of the vineyard to others who would use it better.

83. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—The Parable is a prophecy of the rejection of the nation and the judgment of its leaders. It is a mirror in which leaders and people alike are shown themselves in their privilege, their sin, and their doom. It revives their past—their position as the theocracy, put in trust of the Kingdom of God on earth; the Divine grace and forbearance of which their history bore witness; their repeated rebellions and abuse of privilege; their mishandling of God's messengers, one after other on to John: their rejection of Him-

self, their Messiah. And it announces the end which must come to all this obduracy and misuse of grace—the judgment that will overtake themselves and their nation, and the passing of the Kingdom of God from them to the Gentiles.

84. THE MARRIAGE OF THE KING'S SON (Matt. xxii. 1-14).—This Parable also belongs to the early days of Passion week. It was spoken probably in the hearing not only of the Jewish leaders, but of other listeners of different kinds, and when the former were thinking of Christ's arrest. In so many things it resembles the Parable of the Great Supper (Luke xiv. 15-24), that it has often been regarded simply as another version of it. There are, however, important differences, *e.g.*, in the fact that the subject now is a king, in the kind of feast, in the introduction of what looks like a Parable within the Parable in what is said of the guest without a wedding garment. While the same broad truths, too, are set forth in both, they are presented in distinct ways and different proportions. The ground-work of this Parable is the idea of a wedding-feast. Thus it unites "the two favourite images under which the prophets of the Old Covenant set forth the blessings of the New, and of all near communion with God, ... that of a festival and that of a marriage" (Trench). Messengers are sent to call the invited guests, but the guests decline to come. A second and more imperative call is also made light of by the mass, who are pre-occupied by their own affairs in field or mart; while the rest even inflict outrage and death on the king's servants. His wrath is now kindled, and he destroys the offenders and their

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city. He fills his table with a multitude gathered indiscriminately from the thoroughfares; and when all are seated, he comes in to survey the scene. In the mass of guests thus brought in without distinction, he is surprised to see one who violates the laws of propriety and decorum by appearing in common attire. He demands of the man how he has ventured in without the appropriate wedding dress, that being probably provided by the host himself. The intruder can answer nothing, and is thrust into the cold and darkness outside the banquet-room.

85. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—This too, is a Parable of Judgment. It is a picture of the reception given by these Jews to the call of God. The call had come to them by Christ Himself and His disciples, and it had been refused. It was to come to them a second time by His Apostles when He Himself was rejected. A second time it would be repudiated and its messengers shamefully entreated. Then would come the Divine judgment on their obduracy. The Parable is thus a *prophetic* Parable, in a larger sense than that of the Great Supper. For while the latter speaks mainly of the present, this one looks mainly to the future. It is also more distinctively a Parable of *judgment*. For while the Great Supper also speaks of judgment, its chief burden is grace, and judgment is a subordinate note. But in this one the great subject is judgment, and not only the judgment of the nation but that of the individual. It means that not all who are gathered into the Kingdom of God as it appears on earth are of the Kingdom; that the final condition of admission is the possession of the character that

suits the Kingdom; that the judgment of God enters the Kingdom itself and deals with the individual there, separating the unmeet from the meet and finally excluding the former from His own fellowship and His Son's joy.

86. THE TEN VIRGINS (Matt. xxv. 1-13).—After His last visit to the Temple, on the Tuesday before His Passion, Jesus set out to return, as was His wont, to Bethany. On the way He sat down on the Mount of Olives, and in answer to the question of the disciples delivered His great discourse on the last things. They had asked Him what should be the signs of His own coming and of the end of the world (Matt. xxiv. 3), He had answered, that the day was unknown to man or angel, and had charged them for that reason to *watch* and to be *ready* (Matt. xxiv. 42, 44). It is in this connection that the Parable of the Virgins is introduced, and with the same injunction to watchfulness it concludes. No Parable surpasses this one in beauty or in a pathos which becomes tragic. Nor in any is there a greater contrast between the simple and familiar things which make its story and the magnitude of the truths illustrated. "A few country girls arriving too late for a marriage, and being therefore excluded from the festival, is not in itself a great event; but I know not any words in human language that teach a more piercing lesson than the conclusion of this similitude" (Arnot). It turns upon the evening wedding-procession, which was a great feature in the ceremonies of Jewish marriages, The usual practice seems to have been for the bridegroom, accompanied by his groomsmen, to

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proceed on the evening of the wedding-day to the bride's house and bring her to her new home, the bride with her maids joining the procession, and the whole concluding with a feast in the bridegroom's house. It is not clear, however, that this is the order supposed in the Parable, and the custom itself may have been varied, especially in the case of a bridegroom coming from a distance. Attention is fixed simply on the going forth of a number of maidens, probably the recognised bridesmaids, to meet the bridegroom, without particular indication of where or how they met, or where the procession took them. It seems truer to the tenor of the Parable, however, to suppose them to be gathered at the bride's house, in readiness to meet the bridegroom in a body, than to think of them as joining the procession separately, each from her own home, when it is already on its way. They are of two kinds, however, five wise and five foolish. Each comes provided with her lamp (a simple vessel fixed to the top of a pole, and holding only a small quantity of oil), which it was necessary to have in the dark, unlighted Eastern streets. But the wisdom of the wise is seen in this, that with the lamps they bring oil, each one for herself, sufficient for all contingencies; and the folly of the foolish lies in this, that they bring no oil or insufficient oil, by want of forethought or by careless reliance on others. The bridegroom's arrival is unexpectedly delayed, and the alertness of all flags. They begin to *nod* (as the term for "slumber" means), and at last they sleep, all of them. Suddenly, at midnight itself, when all are least expectant, there is the shout that the bride-

groom is at hand. The wise start from their sleep, feed their lamps, and are ready on the instant. The foolish see their lamps going out, fail in borrowing the oil which they need from their companions, go in hasty quest of a supply, and return only to find the door shut, and themselves denied recognition by the bridegroom.

87. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—The point of the Parable is suggested by the charge to *watch* by which it is preceded and with which it closes. Its broad lesson is not to be confused by seeking distinct spiritual meanings in the *oil*, the *sleep*, and other details. Even the figure of the bride and the marriage itself are entirely in the background. The burden of the Parable is readiness for the Lord's coming, particularly in view of its present delay, the suddenness with which at last it will be realised, and the finality which it means. It illustrates the need of constant watchfulness with a view to this. But it speaks specially and more broadly of what makes the preparedness for that decisive event. Under the figure of a wedding-festival it sets forth the joy of the perfected Kingdom of God. Under that of the burning lamp, it exhibits the personal meetness in character, the light of holiness, without which none can enter that blessedness. It represents this meetness also as a thing of individual concern, which each must seek and acquire for himself, and none can borrow from another. For while there is the company of the ten, "the complete virgin-choir that is to receive the bridegroom and take part in the marriage" (Goebel), each has her own lamp and must feed it

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with her own oil. And it sharpens its great lesson of the wisdom of sedulously seeking this personal meetness, and the folly of neglecting it or trusting to anything but it, by pointing to the impossibility of suddenly remedying its want at the decisive end, and to exclusion from the final joy of God's Kingdom as the inevitable doom of all who fail in it.

88. THE TALENTS (Matt. xxv. 14-30).—Spoken in immediate connection with the *Ten Virgins*, this Parable also looks to Christ's Coming and the duty of readiness for it. It puts the case of a man who, having to take a journey, entrusts the management of his property to his own servants, men, therefore, whom he can trust in his absence. He commits his property to them, however, in unequal proportions, to one five talents (the talent amounting to £225 or £240), to another two, to a third one; and this he does not arbitrarily, but with a view to their several capacities, giving to each just as much or as little as he has reason to suppose him able to manage. The servants are then left forthwith and completely to their own responsibilities. The first trades diligently and doubles his sum; the second does the same with his smaller trust; the third indolently buries his talent in the ground. The master returns and takes account of their trusts. The first is commended for his faithfulness, is rewarded by being set over many things, and is invited to enter into his master's joy; that is, he is raised from the position of servant and made his master's associate in the joy of lordship. The third pleads his fear that his master, whom he regards as one accustomed to seize the benefit of what he does not

toil for, would leave him no better for his labour, and thinks he does enough when he gives back intact what he had received. The folly of his excuse is exposed, his talent is taken from him (not to be appropriated, however, by the master whom he thought hard, but to be added to the reward of the good servant), and he himself is thrust out.

89.—SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—The Parable deals with the need of faithfulness and diligence in the Lord's service in view of His Return. Each of His disciples is put in trust of the word and interests of His Kingdom in this time of His absence. Each receives precisely that measure of trust which he is capable of discharging. Each is rewarded according to the intrinsic value of his service, as work is related to capacity, the man who makes the most of his little being honoured equally with him who makes the most of his much. Each also is judged for his unprofitableness, and his disregard of his master's interest. So it teaches that the non-use of Christ's trust to us has its condemnation as well as the misuse.

90. THE POUNDS (Luke xix. 11-27).—The Parable of the Talents has a companion Parable in the Pounds, which also belongs to our Lord's last days, though to a somewhat earlier time than the former. It was delivered in Jericho, when Zacchaeus had received Him, and after He had spoken of the publican as a son of Abraham, and of Himself as the Son of Man, "come to seek and to save that which was lost." The figure here is taken from a case sufficiently common under the Roman Empire then—the case of creating a Kingship over a

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dependent state. A man of noble birth is supposed to have to make a long journey in order to be invested in such a position. He calls his ten servants together and gives each one mina (equal to from £3 to £3, 15s.) to trade with in his absence. He does this, as it would seem, simply as a test of their fidelity; for the sum is small. He proceeds on his way, but has to encounter the hatred of his fellow-citizens, who attempt a vain protest against his elevation. On returning he finds that one of his servants has gained ten *minae* by his one, and a second five, but that a third has kept his pound unused in a napkin. The faithful are rewarded, and the wicked is condemned as in the Talents. Here, as there, too, the unused *mina* is taken from the slothful servant, and given, spite of the surprise expressed by the bystanders, to him who had gained ten, and is given on the same principle, that capacity brings larger capacity, that non-use brings loss, that not to employ a trust or grace is not to have it. But here we have the double punishment—the destruction of the hostile fellow-citizens, and the deprivation of the wicked servant.

91. SCOPE OF THE PARABLE.—The occasion of the Parable was the idea of those who then heard our Lord, that "the kingdom of God should immediately appear" (v. 11)—an idea stimulated by the exciting events of these days, the crowds and the miracle at Jericho. This Parable was His correction of this false expectation. It intimated His approaching departure from earth, and the trial-time between that and His Return, which

would test the fidelity of His servants, and give opportunity to the hostility of His rejecters. It was prophetic of His Return as the time of reckoning for all—the time of judgment for His rejecters (the Jews), of punishment for the faithless among His disciples, of glorious reward for those who stood the test. It meant also that in this interval His servants are called to work as well as wait; and that all faithful work shall be recompensed according to its measure. It differs from the Talents in that the one *mina* gains in one case ten, and in another five minae; while the five talents gain five, and the two gain two. The truth which it teaches, therefore, is that different measures of service with the word and the things of God's Kingdom, if they result from a larger or smaller use of the same trust, will be recognised by different degrees of reward; while in the Talents the principle is that equal measures of service resulting from different capacities or opportunities will be recognised by equal rewards.

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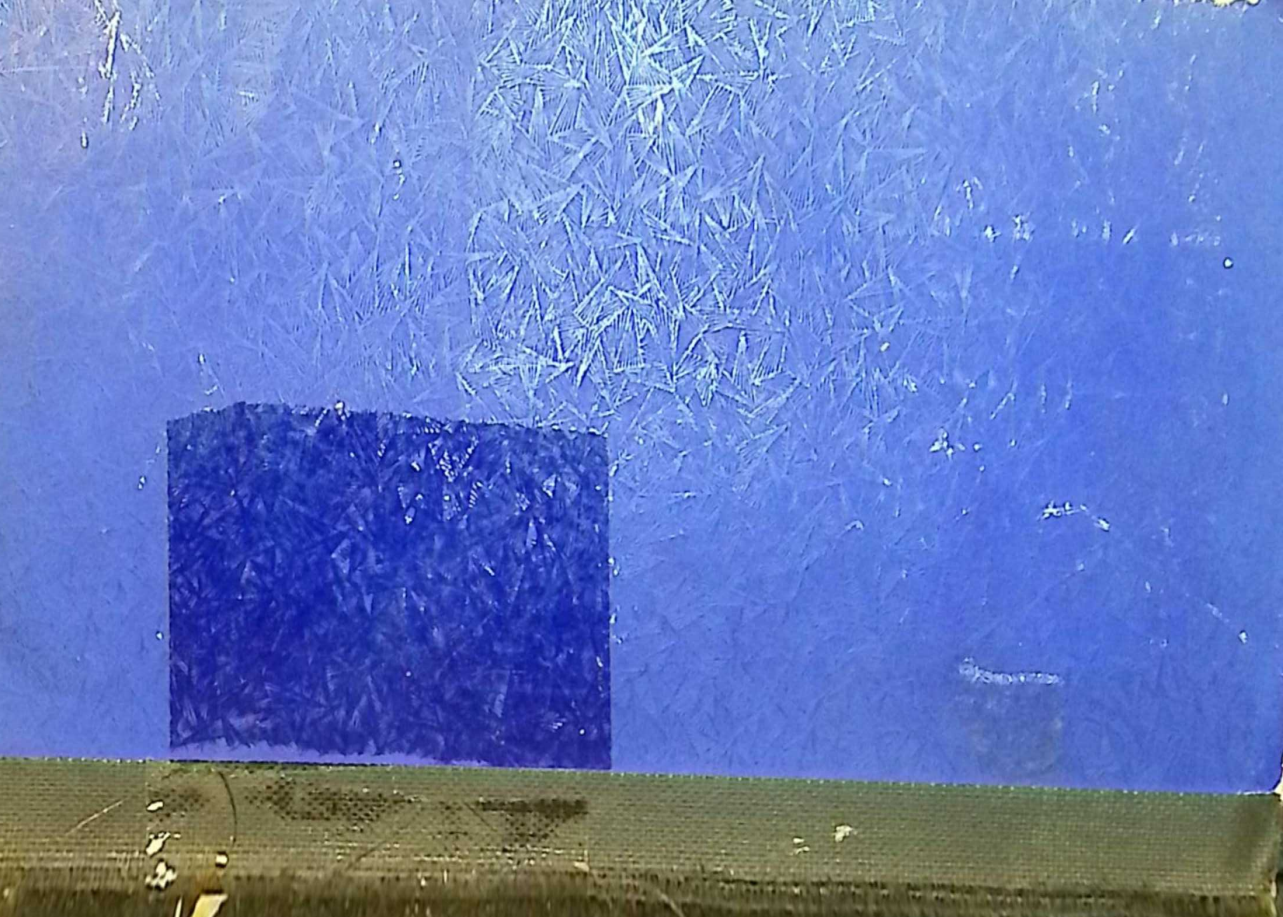
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